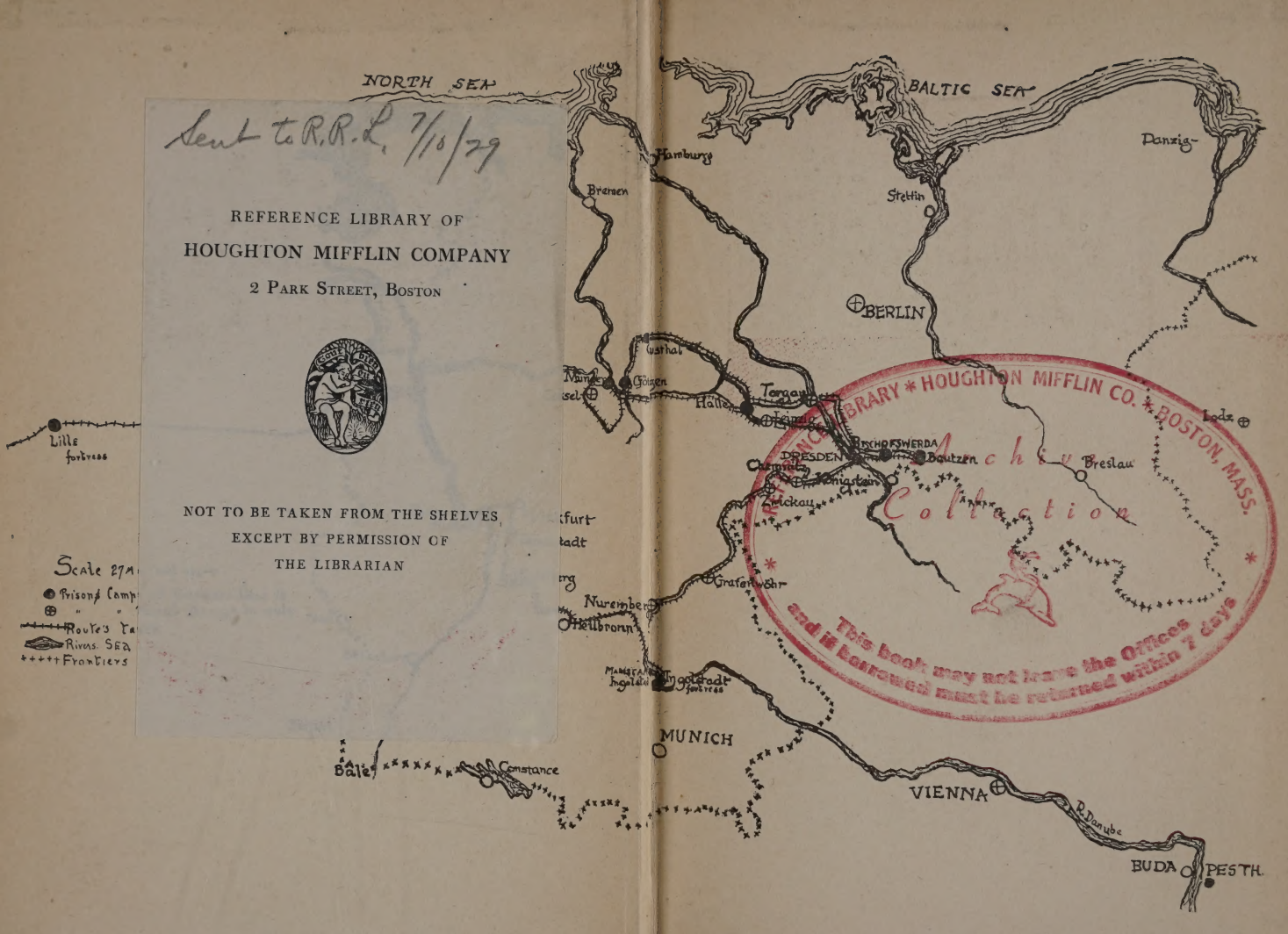
MY GERMAN PRISONS

Captain H. G. Gilliland



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MY GERMAN PRISONS

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THE STORY OF MY TWO AND A HALF YEARS OF CAPTIVITY IN GERMANY AND MY FINAL ESCAPE

NOVEMBER 14, 1914 — APRIL 8, 1917

BY HORACE GRAY GILLILAND

CAPTAIN IN THE LOYAL LANCASHIRE REGIMENT

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY AMBASSADOR JAMES W. GERARD

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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PREFACE

THE writer was appealed to, so constantly and so earnestly, to write his experiences, and was so weary recounting them, that at last he decided to put into print a short account of the happenings within his own personal knowledge during his two and a half years' imprisonment in Germany. He was also encouraged to do so from other and more important reasons.

There are countless people throughout the world who have been so unfortunate as to have intimate friends and relatives in captivity in Germany. In the opinion of the writer, these people ought to know, from one who has had a bitter experience, to which these pages will testify, the true conditions under which the wretched prisoners existed. These pages are entirely uncensored and aim at a true record of events, in which there is no word of hearsay, or stories borrowed from others. As such they must stand. To those who may be inclined to be skeptical towards the newspaper reports of German brutality, it is hoped that this narrative will come as a revelation.

The first edition of this book was published in the summer of 1918, by Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton, of London, receiving a tremendous ovation from the

critics of the London press. The present volume is the original book, rewritten and enlarged by the addition of facts which could not possibly have been published before the cessation of hostilities, for fear of giving valuable information to the enemy, and of calling down the wrath of the Germans on the defenceless heads of the poor prisoners who still remained in bondage.

If the facts disclosed therein bring home to the reader a knowledge of the infamous, relentless, and savage character of the Hun, deliberately dehumanized by the State for the purposes of the State, the writer will feel that his labors have not been in vain.

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INTRODUCTION

I VISITED the camp of Hanover-Munden, where Captain Gilliland was confined, in the spring of 1915. About nine hundred officers, mostly Russians and French, were collected in an old factory building on the banks of the river below the town. There was but little room for exercise, only a space where a few might stand together in a group. The sanitary arrangements were filthy beyond all description and the whole place did not then resemble a decent penitentiary, still less a camp for the confinement of officers. When I spoke to the camp commander, I found him in a semi-intoxicated state. Captain Gilliland, as I remember, although ill, had attempted to escape, weighing, at this time, only one hundred and three pounds. I secured the transfer of the fourteen British officers who were in this camp to the camp or prison of Bischofswerda, in the Kingdom of Saxony, where, according to the accounts of my inspectors, the treatment, lodging, and food were much better than at Hanover-Munden.

Captain Gilliland, as a result of his numerous attempts to escape, was transferred to many officers' detention places in Germany and on one occasion was sent to the camp for enlisted men at Göttingen. This

was also one of the camps visited by me, and was perhaps the best camp for enlisted men which came under my observation in Germany — but that is saying very little. The camp commander, Colonel Bogen, showed more initiative and skill in the management than did the other camp commanders. Some of the professors in the University at Göttingen took an interest in the camp and in the establishment of a library for the prisoners.

In one of the books which I wrote after returning from Germany, I referred to this interest of the college professors and particularly to the work of Professor Stange, praising him for his humanitarian interest in the prisoners. It is hard to be disillusioned concerning the only evidence of humane feeling observed by me in Germany with reference to the prisoners of war, but I have since learned that Professor Stange and the other poisonous snakes from the University of Göttingen had only taken an interest in the affairs of this prison camp for the purpose of doing propaganda work amongst the Belgian soldiers and endeavoring to set those Belgians who spoke Flemish against those speaking French.

I happened to visit another of the camps where Captain Gilliland was confined — Fort number 9, one of the ring forts surrounding the town of Ingolstadt, in Bavaria. My visit was on a bitterly cold winter's day in January, I think in 1916. Captain Gilliland was not

at the time confined to this fort. The officers there suffered very much from the cold and damp. Their quarters, as I remember, were in the casemates or bombproofs of this old-fashioned fort, with little or no heat and a continuous ooze of damp from the stone walls. There was no exercise-ground, a few of the British officers at the time of my visit endeavoring to get a little exercise by coasting down the ramparts.

I have never been able to understand why the Germans treated their prisoners of war so badly, unless it was that they hoped to make these poor prisoners fear for all time the very name of German.

The officers were not, of course, in such evil position as the men, who were leased out like slaves to the owners of factories, farms, and mines and compelled to do slaves' work on rations hardly sufficient to keep a man alive, brutally punished if they failed, and shot like dogs, as were the Irish prisoners in Limburg, when the liquor given to them by their guards excited them to opposition. I have always believed that the guards deliberately gave liquor to the Irish in Limburg for the purpose of inducing them to show some fight and thereby furnish an excuse for murder.

The civilized world cannot permit that these crimes against civilization and humanity and the laws of war shall go unpunished.

The control of the prisoners of war was entirely in

the hands of the representing corps commanders, who in the absence of the fighting army corps, and on the first day of the declaration of war, were clothed with despotic power superseding the civil officers and reporting, not to the General Staff or the Ministry of War, but to the Emperor direct.

The Ministry of War, in endeavoring to exercise a general supervision, was in continual conflict with the corps commander. Colonel Friederich, afterwards General, who, in the Ministry of War, had charge of the prisoners' department, was a particularly common, pig-headed, and disagreeable Prussian. I regret that by his death from heart disease within the last year he cheated the gallows.

He is not the only one. There are others alive of those responsible for the frightful conditions in the prison camps, and these brutal cowards must be made to pay for their cruelty with their own skins.

Captain Gilliland's book is most interesting and gives a true picture of life in German war prisons.

I recommend it to those who are inclined to forgive an unrepentant Germany.

JAMES W. GERARD

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CHAPTER I

CAPTURED BY THE BOCHES

ALTHOUGH the reading public, by this time, must be surfeited with tales of the trenches, and the desperate, bloody encounters on the old fields of 1914, a brief account of the engagement in which I was taken prisoner of war is more or less necessary.

I had the honor of belonging to Field Marshal Lord French's "contemptible little army." Those of us who served under him in these early days feel that they participated in the most critical moments of the campaign; that whatever of honor or misfortune the future might hold, the honor of being just one in the ranks of that army of 1914 was more cherished than a breast full of decorations awarded later. Looking back at the accomplishments of that first army it seems nothing short of superhuman effort when one takes into consideration the stupendous odds against them — never less than six to one, and that of six fresh men against one tired and weary one, with artillery in some sectors limited to six shells per day per battery. We were either entirely without or short of machine guns;

there were no hand grenades or bombs or trench mortars, while the enemy were pouring over their thousands per hour, and we had practically no picks and shovels or sandbags with which to make or build trenches. Doctors and stretcher-bearers were a luxury not always to be found. Rifles and ammunition were limited according to the necessity of the locality, and even uniforms and equipment were none too plentiful. What wonder is it, then, that the thin British line was forever breaking before the enemy's onslaught? The marvel is how these breaks in the lines of trenches were always somehow mended, however thin the patch.

It was in retaking after this fashion three lines of trenches recently wrested from our gallant Indians that I became a prisoner. During the first battle of Ypres, in December, 1914, our division, which was in reserve, was called up, at a moment's notice, to a position in front of a line of our trenches which had been lost to the enemy a few hours before in their attempted advance on Calais. These trenches had been held by Indian regiments, and small blame to them for losing them. Judging from what we saw, they must have had a pretty rough time. I think the position was known as La Bassée Canal position. Our brigade formed up in the dusk about 4.30 P.M. opposite the trenches we were about to attack. Here we were under desultory

shell-fire, but casualties from this were very few. As far as we could make out and from information received, we were within about eighty yards of the Boches. Whilst we were waiting the order to advance, the rain, which had begun to fall, developed into a downpour, accompanied by terrific bursts of thunder. Before the storm abated the expected order arrived. Immediately I rushed up to inform my company commander, but what with the darkness, the crashing thunder, the roar of both our own artillery and that of the Boches, and the villainous tat-tat of the enemy machine guns, I failed to find him.

Recognizing the immediate necessity for action, and the danger of leaving the flank of the unit on our left exposed, I was compelled to act on my own initiative, being the only other officer in the company. The difficulties of commanding a full company in action, without any other officers in the company, are great; but when that action takes place in the dark, over unknown ground, it becomes mere luck if things go well.

When we had taken the first line of trenches with the bayonet and consolidated the position, not hearing from the scouts sent out to reconnoitre, I went over to have a look at the Boches' second line. On my way back I was hit with a bullet in the ankle joint, which felt exactly like a blow from a hammer. Strange to

say, I felt no pain, and found I could manage to get along by using the foot as a sort of stump. The sensation was very similar to what is experienced when one's foot goes to sleep. Shortly after this my orderly informed me that the company on my right was preparing to advance. Immediately a cheer informed me that they had done so, and we swept onward again.

How I was able to lead the men I do not know, but somehow my ankle did the work all right. It was about a hundred yards to the Boche line, and rather too far to attack in one rush. Consequently we got down to establish superiority of fire, when to my alarm I found we were being fired at in flank. A reconnaissance discovered this to be a half-company of men without an officer, belonging to another regiment on my left. Immediately I organized them as my supports, and shortly afterwards took the second Boche line by assault. I use the term "assault" for want of a better, since the Boches had vacated their trenches, leaving only the wounded. We hardly had a minute's breathing-space in this trench when information again came from the right that our men there were advancing, and so on again. Here, however, the Boche really fought it out; but our men, having been properly worked up, would stop at nothing. We gave a good account of ourselves in this last trench, but the men were over and on again; fortunately a deep ditch checked

their further advance, and we stopped again to consolidate.

In front of us, to our right, not more than sixty yards away, stood the ruins of what had evidently been a large farmhouse, only one outhouse of which still remained standing. We had penetrated and searched this shed during our last attack and had found nothing of a suspicious character.

Shortly after we had settled down in our newly captured trench, however, we began to lose a considerable number of men from some unseen sniper. Try as we would, it was impossible to locate him. Reserving for myself the job of again searching the shed in front of us, I hobbled over, but without result. Of course, it must be remembered that it was pitch-dark and one does not see much with a flash-lamp among ruins, especially when the enemy is within a few yards of one. Although I could find nothing, I had the uncomfortable feeling that all was not quite what it appeared. On my return to the trenches, I sent a message to my C.O. in the rear, asking if the artillery might not be allowed to open up on this farm and clear the obstacle away, since it acted as good cover for the enemy and harbored snipers. Unfortunately, however, our artillery did not open up on this spot until nearly twelve hours afterwards; in fact, just after I was taken prisoner late the next afternoon.

About eight o'clock in the evening the officer in charge of our headquarters company came up to the front line and did most excellent work, helping to send back a good many of the men, since we were too crowded. Here it was that, after the excitement was over, I became conscious of my wound, which was paining me exceedingly. However, there was too much to be done for me to lie up with it. All night long we waited for a counter-attack, but nothing happened except desultory shelling and sniping. Towards four o'clock the next morning the enemy's artillery began to get busy, and when the dawn broke we discovered that the enemy had sapped up to us during the night to within easy grenade-throwing distance. Their artillery grew more and more intense. I noted a few fifteen-inch shells, one of which scored a direct hit, but did not explode. We made two or three raids on the sap-heads, but our success was only of a temporary nature.

Towards 8 A.M. the officer commanding the front line paid me a visit, and informed me that he found it impossible to deal with the bombs, having nothing to reply with, and also that the ammunition was running short. He thought the position would very shortly become untenable, in which case he would retire, and if he thought fit would send me orders to do likewise. I never got those orders; and although I had taken every possible precaution to keep in touch with the units on

my right and left, the company of my own battalion on my right managed to carry out their retirement before I was aware of it. Owing to the formation of the ground, it was impossible for us to see anything that was going on on our flanks; we were therefore entirely dependent on our scouts for all information.

About 9.30 A.M. the unit on my left unexpectedly retired, without sending me any explanation as to their reasons.

Suddenly the enemy opened up. There was the devil's own artillery fire which practically made a clean sweep of all the men left in our little bit of trench. I felt a concussion in my right side as if a battering ram had hit me, and I knew that I had been hit in the lungs. I felt myself lifted, and the next moment was gasping for breath under a heap of débris. My lungs were almost bursting when I was pulled out by some of my men. For a few minutes everything was blank, and then the first thing I knew, the Boches were in our trench, both right and left. Immediately I tried to get my remaining men out and retire, only to discover that the Boches had retaken the second line of trenches behind us, which had hitherto acted as our support trenches. We had no communication trenches between the first and second lines, owing to the fact that we had no tools with which to construct them. Thus we had the enemy on four sides of us. The only thing to do

was to make them pay heavily for it. Every moment I expected to hear a British cheer, telling us that our reserves were again attacking, but, alas! none came.

I am not certain what time the Boches surrounded us — I think about 10.30 A.M. Our strength was then roughly about two hundred men; but we held the trench for five and a half hours, after which there were not thirty of us left. Then suddenly the Boches showered us with bombs. The result was final. Personally, I lay at the bottom of the trench, quite incapable of doing or understanding anything. I was only conscious that since the enemy were enraged at our defence, and at the resistance which had caused them so many casualties, we had therefore nothing to hope for from them.

It never dawned on me that I might actually be taken prisoner alive, for I had accepted it as a certainty that I should be finished where I lay. Unconsciously I wondered what it would be like to have one's brains dashed out with the butt-end of a rifle. Would it be very painful? Anyhow, it would be quicker. And then I remember some one jerking me to my feet, where I remained propped up against the side of the trench, whilst the hands of some Hun with the most stinking breath searched my pockets and ripped off my buttons. I don't remember what he looked like — only the revolting odor of his breath. Gradually I began to recover my normal senses, enough to look about me, and found

that three of my men had been gathered up, all of whom looked pretty well done for. The day before I had had three hundred and seventy men under my command, and now these three wounded men were all that was left to tell the tale. Then came a brutal order to move off (*Auf stehen*), of which none of us took the slightest notice, until the order was enforced with the aid of the bayonet and we were driven with bayonets into the enemy's communication trenches, which were at that time up to the waist in mud.

In crossing over No Man's Land I was horrified to see Germans finishing off our wounded with their bayonets. As we were hurried on through the muddy German trenches, regardless of our wounds, we could hear squeals and cries, showing that the Boches were still carrying on with the shameful murdering of our helpless wounded. About three hundred yards back we were handed over to a German officer, who inspected our personal effects, in order to gather any possible information as to our positions. This officer was insulting, but not brutal. In the course of a few minutes we were handed over by him to the charge of a Bavarian non-commissioned officer, to be transported to the divisional base, which was at that time at La Bassée. This N.C.O. first herded us to the dug-out of some friends of his, where we were brutally attacked, knocked down and kicked, and all our personal effects wrested

from us. Regimental buttons and badges were torn off. My cigarette-case, fieldglasses, prismatic compass, money, signet-ring — in fact all my personal effects — were filched. Only the fact that I had been wounded in the ankle through my boot, so that the top of the boot was destroyed, saved me from going into Germany barefoot. As it was, they had wrenched my left boot off before they discovered the condition of the right one.

This was the first real taste we had had of the intense animal ferocity of our captors, — a taste with which we were about to become only too familiar. The vile savagery of this assault on four helpless, bleeding men produced an extraordinary revulsion of feeling — fear and sullen bewilderment combined with pity. Fear of any moment suffering another such assault as we had just gone through — for the flesh is weak and pain is always pain; sullen bewilderment because we had suddenly come into contact with a new savagery and a new evil the like of which we had never even suspected the existence; pity that these men could have become so diseased of mind as to have lost all self-respect and chivalrous instinct. Later on, as we learned to know the Boches better, unconsciously we began to set apart the German frame of mind from that of the rest of the civilized world. We reserved one law of right and wrong, manliness and honorable Christianity for ourselves,

and conceded a different set of laws for them. There was something snake-like and terribly sinister about this trait of cruelty in the Boches — a thing concealed and unsuspected, but always coiled, ready to spring.

Stripped of our possessions, we were driven on. One of the three men with me was shot through the eyes and was totally blind; another was shot through the abdomen and crawled along, holding his bowels in place with his hands; the third had been shot through the jaw and was rapidly losing strength from loss of blood. I had a shattered ankle and a hole torn in my chest by a bullet. It would be quite impossible to imagine the agony of being forced to walk in our badly wounded condition, sometimes up to our waists in the mud of the trenches. Yet such is the composition of the much-vaunted German "Kultur" that although we passed a dressing-station on our way through the enemy's trenches, to which I immediately forced my way regardless of the threats of our guard and appealed for medical aid for my poor men, it was refused with taunts and jeers by the Medical Officer in charge. In a fury, he spat in my face, and yelled out, in bad French, that no sort of Red Cross aid would be given to the English swine. Such callousness is very difficult to understand, but it is evidently part and parcel of the Boche composition.

One piece of trench through which we had to make

our way showed the effects of our magnificent artillery work, as it was literally choked with German dead, over whose bodies we were forced to walk. One of our guards, who was leading, deliberately tramped his way on the bodies of his comrades, numbers of whom were not dead, pushing them into the slimy mud, and when I showed my disgust I was laughed at. A little farther on we came to a trench on which our artillery was ranging, near the ruined shed which, twelve hours earlier, I had asked our batteries to shell. This seemed a good opportunity for our guards to take a little rest, and in order that things might not be too dull we were ordered out of the trench, to stand on the parapet. I cannot explain why none of us were hit, but fate evidently denied the Boches the amusement they craved.

Moving on again, we encountered small parties of reinforcements going up to the front line. In each case we were brutally banged, struck, and joggled, either with the point of a bayonet or with the heavy butt-end of a rifle, and eventually shoved out of the trench to stand under our own fire to the great amusement of our captors. There was plenty of room for these parties to pass without disturbing us at all so that there was no excuse whatsoever for this kind of treatment.

As far as I can remember, when we had covered about a mile, one of my men, mentioned before as having been shot through the jaw, collapsed from loss of

blood. The guard allowed him two or three minutes' grace, then pricked him up again with the point of his bayonet. Again he staggered on, and again collapsed. The same thing happened. I urged him to try to keep up, telling him that his only chance lay in the fact that, since I was an officer, I might be able to do something for him if we ever reached the town. He managed to cover a few more feet, and then sank down, helpless. Without a word, the guard plunged his bayonet through the prostrate man's chest, killing him on the spot.

For a moment we stood, sickened, at the deliberate and cold-blooded murder. Then the blood rushed to my head and the strength of ten seemed to be mine. I turned, raging in ungovernable fury, upon the murderer, only to find myself confronted by a rifle and bayonet, pressed to my stomach. At the other end of the rifle leered an evil face, inviting me to give him the excuse to do the same by me. Like a flash it came to me — "No, by God! I won't give you the chance you're hoping for. In the end, I'll beat you and your kind." My hate was so intense at that moment that I was even able to smile before turning to continue our way through the trenches.

Somehow, we managed to crawl through the mud, and finally reached the main road. The two men and myself continued that awful journey, arm in arm, along the road to La Bassée, the blind man supporting my

right side, but taking directions from me, my left arm supporting the man hit in the abdomen, who was by this time delirious.

At last, after what appeared to be an interminable journey, we stumbled into La Bassée, where our guard handed us over to another N.C.O. at the outskirts of the town, who conducted us to brigade headquarters. This man seemed more or less kindly, even offering me a cigarette. Almost immediately I was ushered before an interrogating officer, with whom I refused to speak before my two men were taken to hospital. He immediately agreed, apparently surprised at our not having received attention at the front line. When I had personally seen my men enter the Red Cross dressing-station, I was again conducted to brigade headquarters. I reported to the interrogating officer the deliberate murder of one of my men and the entire absence of Red Cross aid. This officer smiled scornfully, and remarked that he thought I must be exaggerating, but would make inquiries. Whether he ever did so or not, of course I cannot say. Up to the time of writing I have not been able to trace what happened to the two men I left at La Bassée.

With regard to the interrogation, needless to say very little information was gathered from me. On asking for medical attention for myself, I was informed that I should receive everything I required at the

station, and accordingly I set out, under escort of another guard. One incident of that terrible day stands out as an indication of the depth of intense animal ferocity of which the German mind is capable.

Two German Red Cross N.C.O.'s passed us pushing along a badly wounded British Tommy in a wheelbarrow of sorts. Both his legs had been blown off by a shell or bomb, so that one could see the gleaming ends of the fractured bones. He seemed to be in a half-delirious state, but not so far gone as to be insensible to the agony caused by the bumping of the wheelbarrow over the rough cobblestones which paved the streets. Especially delighted were his two persecutors when they discovered that by rushing their victim up on to the curb and off again, they could actually make the hated Englander groan. The last I saw of the poor fellow he seemed to be more or less mercifully insensible. I appealed to my guard to intervene, but he only mumbled something about "Unter Offiziers" and hurried me along. This man, however, turned out to be quite kindly, as on arrival at the station, not finding any evidence of the Red Cross, he helped me to take off my puttees and breeches, whilst I cleansed my ankle and abdominal wounds under a pump. The guard washed from my puttees and trousers the thick, slimy mud with which they were caked, and helped me to dress again in the clean though wet clothes.

Shortly after this I was taken to a waiting-room in the station, where I found three other officers, one of whom was from my own regiment, who had been taken prisoner early on the same day.

By this time it was nearly dark, probably about five o'clock in the morning. An hour afterwards two or three German officers came in. They made themselves as unpleasant and insulting as possible, producing several Dum-Dum bullets, which they accused us of using, and discussed among themselves the advisability of taking us out and shooting us immediately for breaking the rules of civilized warfare, a decidedly humorous remark from the lips of a Hun. One of the British officers who spoke German argued the foolishness of such an accusation, but to no effect.

About eight o'clock the same evening we were removed with a few men in fourth-class carriages under a strong guard to a station on the way to Lille, where we spent the night in an outhouse which had a small stove in it and a little straw. Here we endeavored to dry some of our clothes, one of our own officers dressing my ankle with his field dressing. Here also some hot soup was brought to us by a German N.C.O., with black bread. During the night, when the stove had gone out, one of our guards noticing some of the sleepers shivering with cold, tried to cover them with some straw. This was a small act of kindness which I shall al-

ways remember. We noticed that any little act of kindness such as this was never done by a German soldier when one of his officers or N.C.O.'s was present or near at hand. In fact later on we found out, beyond question, that almost invariably a German N.C.O. was only an N.C.O. because he was prepared to bully and grind underfoot his fellow men. There are to be found in the German rank and file many superior men, who remain privates because they cannot bring themselves to kick, abuse, and bully their brothers in arms.

Towards early morning we were ordered to dress again in our half-dry clothes, and about six or seven o'clock we entrained in fourth-class carriages and were taken to Lille station. During the journey numbers of trains crammed with German soldiers rushed past us on their way to the front line, with their engines and carriages decorated with flowers as if for a gala occasion.

At Lille an excited and jeering crowd gathered round us, hurling every sort of abusive insult they could think of. Meanwhile our guards formed us into fours and marched us along the platform into the main station, closely followed by the yelling crowd. Thinking that they intended to march us some distance, which afterwards proved to be the case, I asked the German officer in charge of our party for some sort of conveyance, indicating my wounds, and calling the wounded men to

his attention. My request was coldly refused, however, and we were marched from the station to the old fortress of Lille.

On the way we received many signs of deep sympathy from the Belgian populace; most of the women seemed to be crying, and I noticed that the men bared their heads in token of respect. On two or three occasions some women tried to press chocolate into the men's hands. In one case, where one of the German guards saw a woman doing this, he beat her down with the butt-end of his rifle. Many Germans yelled insults at us, but the guard next to me remarked that we must take no notice of such people, as they were only soldiers employed on lines of communication, and had therefore never been in the front line, so did not know what fighting was. I mention this because it is so rare to find a spirit of chivalry amongst the Boches, and in an account of this kind it is only fair to write of both the good and the bad sides of their characters.

CHAPTER II

BY CATTLE-TRUCK TO MUNDEN

When we arrived at the fortress we were separated from the men, the officers undergoing another interrogation. On asking for immediate medical attention, we were assured it would be forthcoming directly. When we entered the room allotted to us, we found three other British officers, who had been taken prisoners some days previously, and who at once set about preparing a meal for us out of their own scanty provisions. There was only one proper bed in the place, which was given up to me at once; the rest were dirty palliasses thrown on the ground. A Belgian orderly was provided to look after us and bring us the daily ration. He also had the privilege of going into the town of Lille and buying little extras, though at a very costly price, as we soon found out.

Later we learned that the ground-floor quarters of the fortress were occupied by a number of native troops. On the following day one of my brother officers paid them a visit, and found them living in very unhealthy conditions, suffering greatly from the cold, owing to the fact that the Germans had relieved them of their greatcoats. These poor fellows were clad, therefore,

as for their own climate, and were suffering acutely. However, they had been treated fairly well in other respects, and had plenty to eat. In the afternoon of the same day there was a great hubbub amongst them, owing to the fact that a Baboo (a professional agitator) was haranguing them in the fortress close. One of their subahdar majors expressed to us his extreme disgust at the German attempt to tamper with their loyalty. The gist of the agitation was to induce the native troops to throw off their allegiance to the British Crown and fight against the Russians on the Eastern Front.

Throughout the day I continually asked for medical attention, but was always put off by the reply that the doctor was expected every minute. This farce of medical attention continued during the whole period of our stay in Lille, but no doctor ever arrived. A Red Cross dresser did visit me, but on examination declared that he was not competent to deal with the case and must leave it to the doctor.

On the night of the 25th of December we were removed with a lot of men, consisting of British, French, Belgian, and a few native troops, from the fortress to the main station at Lille. When we arrived there, the whole place was found to be brilliantly illuminated with decorated Christmas trees, exactly as one sees at a children's party, the whole German populace being in holiday attire. On this occasion we were fortunately

kept well away both from the civilians and others, so that the chances of being insulted were greatly reduced.

Almost immediately we were marshalled down a long platform and halted opposite a line of filthy-looking cattle-trucks, with the usual sliding-doors in the centre and two small trap-doors high up on the side. I mention the latter, because it was through these that we were stoned later on in the journey by some of the chivalrous enemy. The interior of the trucks was disgustingly dirty, and not even provided with straw.

Into these trucks we were bundled. Although forty men cannot be put into a cattle-truck without becoming so cramped that they are unable to move, fifty-one of us, including officers, British Tommies, some French, and a few Zouaves, were crowded into one truck. Most of us were wounded, and no matter where your wound might be, some other fellow's head, or arm, or foot leaned against it.

Of course it was not possible for all to lie or sit. The wounded did, but the others mostly stood. Personally I do not remember very much of that terrible journey. My wounds were giving me so much pain that, with the jolting of the truck, the extreme cold, and the want of food, I became mostly and mercifully oblivious to my general surroundings. A few incidents remain in my memory, however. Although it was bitterly cold, whenever the train pulled up at small sta-

tions, the big sliding-doors of the truck were opened, and the German populace scrambled in and robbed both officers and men of any sort of warm outer clothing that they might have saved from the clutches of the Hun on the field, Burberrys being their particular aim. Since we could not move a muscle, the Germans dragged us to our feet, stripped us of any garment they might fancy, and then threw us back again. We suffered very much from hunger and the cold. Personally I did not suffer so much from the former, probably owing to the condition of my wounds; but I know that my companions were ravenous, as we had had very little whilst in Lille, nothing in the trucks all the first night, and nothing all the next day. During this period no sanitary arrangements of any kind were made for us.

Early in the morning of the second day two German guards were put in with us, and also a small bench for them to sit on. These two fellows turned out to be extremely kind, insisted on standing and letting some of the wounded sit on their bench, and divided some of their rations with a few of us. Unfortunately, however, they were only with us for a few hours. Several times during that terrible day we were stoned by the populace through the small trap-doors, some of the men being severely hurt. By "stones" I do not mean small pebbles; I mean large stones, heavy enough to knock

a man senseless. Although we had had nothing to eat for two days, the only food we received were a few bits of sour black bread which were thrown in upon us through the small trap-doors, just as one might throw scraps to a caged jackal. We had no water to drink.

Late that afternoon our train drew up at a station, and the doors were opened. We were all burning up with fever, since every one knows that a wounded man develops a very high fever. We were mad with thirst, and were shrieking for water. Then it was that the German civilians, gathered to gaze at their captives, thought of a capital joke to play on the "Schweinhunde Engländer." Several of them hurried away "for water." They soon returned, bringing small jam and fish tins, filled with a yellowish-brown liquid, which they gave to the men. The tins were madly scrambled for — and found to contain urine. This to wounded men, burning up with fever and nearly dying of thirst!

Later, I often wondered what are these creatures, who so torture helpless captives, some of them wounded — all of them friendless, sick at heart, and helpless. These fiends walk on two feet as we; they have the outward semblance of men; they have intellectual minds, as proved by the great men they have produced. They pretend to worship the same Christian God. Yet they stoop to this cruelty and to worse than this — far

worse; to acts which indicate the depths of moral depravity.

What, then, is wrong? Where is the kink in their mental structure? The nation's innermost soul seems sodden with a craving for the vicious, obscene, and the savage. I say "nation's," advisedly, for it must be clearly understood that these frightfulnesses are not to be blamed to the military authorities alone. From what, then, does this national savagery spring? What vitriolic chemical has been poured upon their souls?

It springs from the insidious and incessant teachings of years; from the school-teacher, from the pulpit, from the press, and from the theologians. The nation has been saturated, from earliest childhood, in the distorted belief that God and Christ had gloriously predestined the German people to force their doctrine of "Kultur" and "might is right" upon the world. This, naturally, could only be brought about by war, and consequently the practice of arms was the most god-like and most soul-inspiring profession.

That war was of God and out of God, that war was the noble regeneration of the soul, was the doctrine preached by one of the most famous German doctors of divinity. German soldiers were likened by him to Christ, being, as they were, crucified humanity for the good of Kultur and the Fatherland. The duty of the divine German, he said, is therefore to crucify man-

kind; to kill, burn, slay, desolate, and destroy. There should be no half-measures, since God did not approve of half-measures in war.

Towards the end of the second day we reached Cologne, and spent the night on a siding. On the main platform of Cologne we saw some members of the German Red Cross, from whom we demanded food, and who immediately went away to fetch it. On their return the German sentries placed at the truck door would not allow any of it to be passed to the "Schweinhunde Engländer." A little was, however, distributed to the French, who very liberally shared it with us. My particular portion consisted of about two inches of a small raw sausage.

I forgot to mention that on this last day on two occasions, when the men were bustled out to a latrine, such was the depraved cruelty of our guards that they allowed no time for the men to complete these necessities, and in one case exposed a man in view of a crowd of jeering civilians whilst in an undressed condition.

Towards the afternoon of the third day we reached Munden, Hanover, where we were detrained, taken to a waiting-room, and supplied by the Red Cross with a much-needed ration of hot soup and bread. After this we were paraded, divided from the men, and marched to the camp of Munden, which is situated on the banks of the river Weser, at a distance of about a

mile and a half from the station. Here I again pointed out my condition to the officer in charge of our party, but gained nothing, not even a conveyance to the camp. The officer said that a conveyance was coming for the wounded. I replied, "So is Christmas," but evidently he did not see it. Anyhow, the outcome of it was we had to walk. We arrived at the camp some time during the evening, and were immediately segregated in a room by ourselves, where we found some palliasses thrown on the ground, filled with straw. Some coarse sheets and blankets were also provided, also a washing-stand and a bootjack. I mention the latter because the German orderly told off to look after us kept on picking up this beastly bootjack, gesticulating that everything was provided, even a bootjack. The following day we were again interrogated, and personal effects, such as letters, notebooks, and money, some of which my brother officers still had in their possession, were temporarily confiscated. The equivalent of the money, however, was returned in German coinage. After this we were allotted rooms, and found, to our dismay, that we were to be separated. The Germans, having found out that the British were very much happier when by themselves, arranged that one British officer always occupied a room filled with officers of any other nationality but his own. It was in little ways such as this that the Boches showed a marked

hostility to British officers in comparison with that shown to the Russian or French. In the room to which I was sent there were already fifteen Russians.

Shortly after being allotted rooms I was conducted to hospital, where on the ground floor of the building the wound in my ankle was satisfactorily dressed; but they did not seem to know what to do with the body wound. Finding that three of the ribs were broken on the right side, they made some sort of an attempt to set and bind them. The doctor in attendance was a bumptious little beast of about nineteen or twenty years of age, and did not seem to know very much about his job. After this I returned to my room full of Russians and took to my bed.

The camp at Munden was an old oil factory, which had been hastily turned into a camp for prisoners of war. There were about eight hundred prisoners there at the time of our arrival, but more came after we had been there a month or two. The sleeping-room had practically no furniture of any kind. A shelf, on which tin basins were placed, served as a wash-stand, and there were a couple of pails for water. Two small tables and about a dozen chairs, with a small shelf about five inches wide passing over the head of each bed, completed the furnishing of the rooms.

The ground floor was divided up into an eating-hall about fifty yards long, a canteen, and *Krankenstahe* (or

lavatory). The second, third, and fourth floors had been partitioned off into wooden cubicles about thirty feet square to be utilized for sleeping accommodations. Into these rooms sixteen Russians and one British officer were crammed, which made seventeen men sleeping in one small room, with one small ventilator pane about seventeen inches wide for the entire ventilation of the room.

Here we were herded at night, and during the earliest period of our imprisonment we were not allowed to come out to perform the natural functions of the body. The only sanitary arrangements which were made were two pails placed in each room. If these overflowed, as constantly happened, there was no remedy but to endure it. Diseased men were put in with men who were fit, so that contagion and infection were inevitable.

During the day we descended to the eating-hall, and although it was impossible to find any comfort in this filthy place we were only too glad to get away from the overladen atmosphere of the sleeping-room.

At meal-times an orderly was supplied to each group of officers. As no proper utensils were furnished for the orderlies to fetch the rations of rotten fish and potatoes, which were the usual food, these orderlies had to fetch the food in the same pails which had been used for other purposes, and when these arrived, one was

forced to dip one's hand into the pail, take out some of the frightful food, or go without and starve.

The reader must remember that these frightful and disgusting details were not the result of chance — the whole atmosphere was deliberately contrived to break down the spirit, endurance, and health of the prisoners.

The best part of the camp were the baths, which were quite good, hot and cold water being obtainable up to midday, Sunday excepted. The space set apart for an exercise-ground was a muddy stretch of about ninety yards square, surrounded by two lines of wire. Into this yard, protruding from the ground floor of the factory, ran a long wooden latrine, which was the most dreadful place imaginable, merely a series of holes cut in the ground, with no form of drainage. The only attempt at draining them was made by our own orderlies, who pumped them out, and disposed of the contents in another large hole just outside the wire. On a warmish day, with the wind blowing towards the camp, it became impossible to take exercise outside at all; and towards February, 1915, in order to visit these same latrines, it became absolutely necessary to cover over one's mouth and nose. In this same yard the general rubbish-heap of the camp was piled with every kind of rotting refuse, on which flies swarmed. Indoors the camp was infested with lice, especially the

hospital-room. The Russian officers had been suffering from this pestilence for a long time before the arrival of the British, and no attempt had been made on the part of the Germans to rid the camp of this vermin, either by fumigating or in any other manner.

Towards the end of March, when I had been removed from my room to a bed in the hospital situated on the ground floor, I asked one of our officers, who, owing to a great family name, seemed to have more influence with the Boches, to complain to the commandant of the appalling state of filth reigning in the hospital, some of the beds being literally alive with many thousands of lice. The outcome of this complaint resulted in the importation of incinerators to the camp, after which things became distinctly better.

CHAPTER III

THE DREARINESS OF CAMP LIFE

During the period of our captivity at Munden the time passed more heavily, I think, than at any later period, owing to the fact that we had practically no reading matter. Parcels and letters from home were very scarce. No daily papers nor periodicals of any sort were allowed, not even German, only a rag called "The Continental Times: A Journal for Americans in Germany" — probably the most scandalous paper ever produced, copies of which should certainly be printed after the declaration of peace, and would be worth a guinea a copy, I can assure you. There were only about a dozen English novels in the camp, and no means of obtaining more; consequently, to keep one's mind occupied, one had to read them over and over again; also, to make things worse, smoking was prohibited as a general strafe, because some Russian officers sang their national hymn in the yard one Sunday — confinement to cells, along with the common felons in the civilian jail, situated in the town, being the penalty if caught smoking. Personally I bribed certain guards to procure cigarettes for me. It can well be imagined that one had to pay heavily for them, about

fourpence apiece, for a very low-class cigarette made of German tobacco, being an average price. Even then one could only manage to buy a limited number. Often enough a cigarette would be divided in half and shared with one's pal, so that one seldom got more than a few whiffs. Cigarettes arriving in parcels from home were, of course, not delivered to us.

My parcels from home began to come fairly regularly towards the end of February, 1915, having been a very long time on the way. Occasionally books were included, which the Huns would take months to censor. Even then one was not always certain of receiving these, even though written years before the outbreak of war, lest they should contain information on any subject which might prove useful to prisoners.

The name of the German commandant at Munden in 1914 was "Hauptmann Albrecht," a Prussian of the Prussians, arrogant beyond words. It is one of the names which should be known to the civilized world, as it was by his orders that the attempted demoralization of prisoners was carried out. I believe that he systematically worked to destroy the moral vitality of his prisoners, aiming to degrade them into apathetic blocks denuded of moral pluck, and trying by every means to make their captivity as painful as possible.

Perhaps the commandant received orders from Headquarters to carry on this system of petty vexation and

numberless pin-pricks, so much harder to bear than deeper wounds. If so, he can pride himself on having carried out his orders to the letter and even beyond that. The close proximity of the sentries placed inside the camp who often insulted and spat on us, and who, occasionally, even handled us with their bayonets; the being forbidden to smoke; the long, wearing waits standing on parade in the cold and rain and snow of the winter of 1914, while the commandant held his *Appell* (roll-call) which the sick and wounded alike were forced to attend; the terrible unsanitary condition of the latrines; the crowding of the improperly ventilated rooms, when there were empty rooms in the camp, — these, and numberless others, were the persecutions of the "Herr Hauptmann Albrecht" alone, as they did not exist in any other camp in that district at that time.

On one occasion all officers of Irish nationality were ordered to attend on the commandant. At that time there were only two of us, but we managed to extract a little amusement from the interview. For instance, he could not be brought to understand how it was possible that Irishmen, either from the north or south, could serve in English regiments, since the greatest animosity existed between the Irish and their English oppressors. We were informed that, since we were Irish, arrangements were being made to transfer us to another camp, where conditions would be very

much better. We thanked the commandant, but in the end we never heard any more about it. Obviously this was an attempt to tamper with our loyalty.

Soon after our interview with the commandant the whole camp received orders for inoculation for typhus, which was immediately carried out by the visiting doctor — the same little upstart before described, who took great joy in jabbing the needle as roughly and deeply as possible, so that most of us were quite sore for some time afterwards.

The majority of the officers tried to pass the time acquiring languages, several studying Russian, and nearly all learning French or perfecting themselves in that language. A few took up German, taking lessons in the latter from French officers, some of whom spoke German perfectly. People at home might think that those officers who did not avail themselves of apparently so good an opportunity of learning foreign languages, and in so doing passing many of the weary hours, were extremely foolish; but, believe me, it is quite a different matter to study at home or at college, where one can be more or less quiet, to studying as a prisoner in Germany, where it is extremely difficult, if not almost impossible, to get a moment's peace. Let the reader imagine, if he can, trying to learn a foreign tongue with the whole of the rest of the people in his room babbling aloud other languages. Officers and

their instructors were usually to be seen seated on their beds, for lack of other places, in a close and stuffy atmosphere, with a continuous babble going on on all sides. Say, for instance, you were learning German, when on the next bed, not three feet away, somebody else would be repeating French aloud. On the bed on your other side a Russian lesson would be in progress, and perhaps over in the far corner of the room a lot of Frenchmen of the Foreign Legion would be endeavoring to keep up their Arabic, whilst grouped around the hot-water pipes a heated discussion, either in French or English, as to the probable duration of the war, peace terms, etc., would be going on.

Talk about the Tower of Babel; it could not have been in it. To add to the general distraction, it must be explained that the doors of the sleeping-rooms were all pierced by a small glass window-lattice, through which the sentries placed inside the building were continually watching us. You would look up suddenly from whatever you might be doing, either studying, reading, or performing your toilet, to find a grimy face pressed against the lattice, furtively watching your every movement. Naturally the very sight of their ugly faces in such close proximity made one's internals seethe in a hopeless longing to get at them.

I have already stated that the camp at Munden was situated directly on the banks of the river Weser, on

the other side of which ran a railway line, along which troops both going and coming could often be seen. On one occasion some of these troops, thinking they would indulge in a little sport, began firing at the camp from the train, which ran at that spot up a very steep gradient, and a bullet actually passed through a window of one of the rooms and lodged itself in the plaster of the wall opposite. Fortunately for the prisoners, no one was hit; but that was not the fault of the Boches. Firing at prison camps containing helpless prisoners would certainly appeal to the humor of the German mind. Of course complaints were made to the commandant, but, as usual, nothing came of them.

Continual small drafts of prisoners were always arriving at the camp, accompanied by a German officer and guard. One of these officers, seeing a group of British seated in the eating-hall, came up very politely and expressed his sorrow at seeing them there, but told them to cheer up, as the war would soon be over. As a matter of fact he said, "We shall be in London by six weeks from now." Note that this remark was made in February, 1915! He also went on to say that London was already partially destroyed. He was not bragging, and seemed quite a decent sort of chap; but he really thought that what he said was true. It is the most extraordinary thing how the German Government, in conjunction with their press, have been able to make their

people believe any lie, even to the extent that London was in flames and the populace living on rats, and that seaports such as Southampton and Portsmouth were destroyed by gun-fire from their fleet. This latter was told to me in all faith at the fortress of Ingolstadt in 1916.

Great excitement was one day caused amongst us at Munden owing to the fact that a Russian orderly had been seen carrying from the canteen a plate on which two fried eggs sat in state. He had not proceeded fifty yards before he was surrounded by officers, quite off their heads at the sight of two eggs, inquiring as to where he got them, if there were any more, and how much he would take for them, officers bidding twenty or thirty marks for the eggs. But, unfortunately, the orderly was true to his trust. It appeared that they had been procured as a special mark of favor from the commandant to a Russian general who was suffering from stomach trouble, and who had not been able to eat anything solid for a very long time. Of course every one rushed to the canteen to order eggs, but there was nothing doing, the sight of the eggs lingering in our memories as a beautiful dream.

It is a very difficult task to write any sort of interesting account of life in general at this camp, since every day was more or less the same as the preceding one. Few things came to vary the dreary monotony.

One plucky attempt at escape from Munden is, however, worth recording. The occupant of the next bed to mine in the hospital was a British subaltern who later made a successful escape from Germany, so I have no hesitation in recording his first courageous effort, having obtained his permission to do so.

At the time of which I write this officer was suffering from an awful skin disease, probably caused by eating the bad pork already described. His lower limbs were practically a running sore, yet he made a successful escape from the camp swathed in bandages. Unluckily he and some three or four Russian officers who escaped with him were caught, after being out some five or six days, and within seventy miles or so of the Dutch frontier, having failed principally from exhaustion. The means of escape was engineered through an old disused air-vent, which led from the factory to some outbuildings, passing over the heads of the sentries and the two fences of wire which surrounded the camp.

The Russians planned to pierce the wall of the factory opposite this air-vent, and if possible use it as a means of passing the sentries unseen. It appears that one of the Russian senior officers had obtained leave to hire a piano and use one of the rooms as a general music-room. The piano was placed against the wall of the factory directly opposite the spot calculated to strike

the disused air-vent, and left in that position for some time, in order to divert attention. Then, when a number of musicians were playing all kinds of instruments and tunes, the wall behind the piano was gradually picked away, and although the Boches were continually in and out of the room they never suspected anything. The picking of the wall was carried out with the only instrument available, that is, an ordinary small pocket-knife.

When they had pierced into the air-vent, which must have taken a great deal of labor, a nice dark night was chosen for the attempt. Having been previously warned as to when this was to take place, I helped Lieutenant —— in every way I could. I got up from my bed and put on a greatcoat over my pyjamas. Hidden under the greatcoat was a complete mufti outfit, procured mostly from the Russians, which I conveyed past the sentries to the above-mentioned music-room, depositing the bundle in hiding. On my return the lieutenant left the hospital and proceeded to the music-room, after which I did not see him till some three weeks later — on the day, in fact, when all the British officers were removed to another camp in Saxony.

Immediately Lieutenant —— left the hospital I busied myself in stuffing all the available pillows into the semblance of a man's form, placing it in his bed,

and covering the whole with sheets and blankets well pulled up around the head, so that when the Boche hospital orderly came on his round with the medicines the last thing at night, he might, with a bit of luck, be deceived, and imagine the lieutenant to be in bed asleep in his usual attitude, with his head almost completely enveloped by the bed-clothes. This ruse was a complete success. I explained to the orderly, when he arrived, that Lieutenant —— had a very bad headache and had just dropped off to sleep, and that, as it would be a great pity to disturb him, if he liked, I would give him the medicine immediately he awoke. The orderly, being only too keen to get his job finished, agreed with alacrity. The places of the other Russians who had also escaped were taken by their pals, who had remained behind, in the following manner. As each sleeping-room was divided by a wooden partition, it was quite easy to cut a passage which a man might creep through. When the call-over came at night, the Russians first answered their names in their own room, then quietly slipped through the prepared passage and answered the names of their pals in the next room.

On the following morning the Boche N.C.O. came to the hospital, demanding Lieutenant ——'s signature to a draft of money just arrived from home. Again I put him off, and told the orderly he would take a serious responsibility if he roused the lieutenant in his

present condition, pointing to his apparently sleeping form in the bed as I did so. The ruse again succeeded, but I must say I thought it was all up that time.

That evening there were about thirty Russians assembled in the music-room, also trying their luck, but they went about the whole thing in such a foolish manner that they attracted the attention of the guards inside the building, and before a dozen of them had been able to pass through the hole the suspicions of the Boches were aroused. A raid was made on the room, and of course everything was discovered. However, as I have said, a few of them had already got away. A hasty and flurried search was made by the Boches in the immediate vicinity of the camp. My fellow prisoners described what they were able to see of it from the top story of the factory — of how the sentries dashed from one bush to another, carrying large oil lanterns in a ridiculous attempt to find prisoners concealed under bushes about two feet high, when thick cover in the shape of woods stretching for miles encircled the whole camp. The Boches also had a whole brigade of dogs tethered on leading-chains to help them, but they seemed as useless as their masters.

However, all those who did get away were eventually captured. As a matter of fact it is very doubtful if the first lot, of which Lieutenant —— was one, would have been recaptured at all if the other lot had

waited, say a week, before trying the same thing; but as they took the same route as the others, they only led the Boches straight on the track of the first lot, which was hardly playing the game. Each officer as he was recaptured was brought back to the camp, but was not allowed to be present at any of his brother officers' court-martials. Sentences of various periods were passed on them, and they were all confined to cells in the civilian prison in the town of Munden.

CHAPTER IV

OUR REMOVAL TO BISCHOFSWERDA

About three weeks after the happenings just described, all the British officers were removed from Munden. We were enabled to bring our condition to the notice of the American Ambassador, Mr. Gerard, to whom all British prisoners will always owe a debt of gratitude. How this was brought about may interest the reader. It so happened that in my school days I belonged to one of those youthful fraternities which delight in code words, secret writings, and the like. Many a time since have I blessed that boyish idiosyncrasy, as by this means I was able to establish a new code between my mother at home and myself, which eventually helped to bring about many changes for our good.

In this way we were able to write home and represent the true state of the awful camp in which we were, our letters passing through the bureau of the ever-watchful German censors, without raising the least suspicion. In my letters home I asked the authorities to procure a visit of inspection from the American Ambassador. It took about three months to accomplish this, owing to the time our letters were hung up in the German Censor Office. We were visited by Mr. Gerard

in person about the middle of April, 1915, when he was conducted over the camp by the senior British officer and saw for himself all the disgusting details. The outcome of his representation to the German authorities in Berlin was our removal from that pestilential place on the 28th of April. Before we left, the weather, seeing that we were well into spring, was becoming warmer every day, and in consequence the sanitation was rapidly getting into a shocking state. For some weeks past Russians had been suddenly taken ill, and were always removed very quietly on covered stretchers. As they did not lie in the hospital-room of the camp, we inquired of the hospital orderly what was the matter; he said, "I don't know, but they have gone to the typhus hospital."

I shall always remember the journey to our new camp at Bischofswerda and with what bright hopes we received the order to pack up our goods and clothes on the night of the 27th of April, in order to be ready to start at 4.30 the next morning. Packing did not take very long, as our sole possessions were our clothes, some precious tins of food, and a few equally precious books. When we assembled in the yard the following morning, we found there were to be about two hundred of us — fourteen British, and the rest made up of French, Russians, and a few Belgians.

The journey to Bischofswerda was more or less un-

eventful, except that instead of cattle-trucks we were in fourth-class compartments, which was extreme luxury after our last experience — also that on two occasions on the way we left the train and received a ration of food, which was not too bad. We were decently treated by the officer in charge, the second in command of the camp at Munden, who had always behaved towards the prisoners with courtesy. Unfortunately he was only second in command. Had he been commandant, life there would have been very much easier.

We arrived at the station of Bischofswerda about eleven at night, and marched to the camp, situated a mile and a half away on the outskirts of the town. On our arrival there we were very roughly greeted by our new commandant, but the place was so beautifully clean and airy that we took no notice of him. Our change was certainly very much for the better. Bischofswerda, with its long stone corridors, looked like paradise to us. The German officer who had conveyed us there took his leave immediately on handing over his charge to the new commandant, and very kindly wished us good luck in our new abode.

About two o'clock in the morning we were all allotted our rooms, and on seeing these we again congratulated ourselves on our deliverance from Munden. The camp was a brand-new cavalry barracks. The quarters were well planned and beautifully clean. How

we did appreciate the cleanliness after Munden! The sanitary arrangements were excellent — flush drains, etc., also a good large stone tiled shower-bath, with both hot and cold water. Naturally the hot was limited to so many minutes. A good canteen, dining-hall, and a large room turned into a chapel for the different religious services, which was also used as a music-room; also a small room set apart as a hospital and consulting-room, — all these were situated on the ground floor, the sleeping accommodation being on the second, third, and fourth floors. The sleeping-rooms were each allotted orderlies. This sounds rather nice, but when you have only one orderly for each room containing from eight to ten officers, and that orderly is on general fatigue for the Boches at the same time, it's not so good as it sounds. Our orderlies were made to scrub the corridors, passages, and stairs, peel potatoes, attend the eating-hall, and every other kind of work the Boches might want done.

On inspection — or *Appell*, as the roll-call was named — we found we had been preceded the previous day by about thirty Canadians recently captured, from whom we greedily lapped up the latest news from the front and the old country, and were greatly overjoyed to find that things in general were not a thousandth part as bad as had been represented to us. Not that the reader must believe that we swallowed every-

thing we were told; but when one hears no news from home month after month as to the true conditions, it is impossible to remain forever optimistic. Even in the years that followed, as weeks followed weeks without any perceptible advance on the part of the Entente, we still remained optimistic, with but occasional lapses of depression; the keynote with us was always *on les aura*. The Canadians turned out to be a fine bunch of fellows and most cheery withal. They had been prisoners only a week, and had been quite well treated on the way from the front. When I say "well treated," I mean that, according to their story, they were not badly used. As far as I know, there was only one case of neglected wounds among them. The one instance was a well-known young man from Vancouver, who had been hit in the buttock, the bullet having lodged in the spine. Although he was gradually getting worse, up to the time I finally left Bischofswerda, in October, 1916, the wound was still unattended.

After hearing all the news we proceeded to the canteen, and found, to our huge delight, that we could buy, amongst other things, a small roll of white bread, and also eggs; in fact, almost everything could be got at that time by ordering the day before — eggs, meat, butter, bread, lettuce, and many other small things. Of course one paid preposterous prices; but we could buy food, which was all we wanted — also the food was

served from the kitchen on clean plates and in clean cooking utensils. Indeed, we had fallen into the lap of the gods. Quite a large proportion of the actual ration was edible, though extremely monotonous, the bread being of a light brown color and, although rather sticky and spongy, a very great improvement on the awful bread at Munden. At the dry canteen one could buy almost anything, so long as one chose to pay for it — quite good cigarettes, notebooks and writing materials, toilet articles, deck-chairs, in fact most things that a prisoner could require. Some little time after we arrived the canteen even produced wine and brandy. The wine at first was quite drinkable, but soon grew worse and worse, until it became nothing more or less than sweetened spirit, which had a very bad effect on the stomach. The brandy soon gave out, after which orders were given to sell no more. Towards August, 1915, we could buy occasionally some venison and partridge, and for special occasions, such as Christmas, 1915, a goose, the price of which ran to about three dollars a pound. It was worth it, however.

Outside the building, the parade ground and cavalry school training-ground, wired in by two rows of wire fences about eight feet high, served as an exercise-ground for the prisoners. In between the two rows of wire, sentries were placed about thirty-five yards apart. Every fifty yards a powerful arc lamp, raised

on high standards, showed up the designs of a would-be escaper. The parade ground was roughly about ninety yards by sixty yards and the riding-school ninety yards by forty-five yards. This latter was laid with deep sand, and served as a football-ground for the prisoners — very hard going for a fast game like footer, but nevertheless much appreciated. At first the parade ground was used only for walking, but after a great deal of persuasion and expense the British built two hard tennis courts. I forget how much the cost was, though I acted as secretary to the club. It was somewhere in the neighborhood of about three thousand marks apiece, or three hundred pounds for the two, although almost all the work was put in by the officers themselves. Two very old men and a small boy were the Boche contribution of labor, and these mostly spent their time eating, or so it seemed to us. However, we did get the courts, which was the main point.

About one hundred yards to the west from the outside wire fence of the camp was a large area of ploughed fields and stubble used by the Boches as a training camp for their young troops, probably recruited from the districts around and about Bischofswerda and Dresden.

Many an instructive afternoon have I spent in watching the German methods of military training and thanked my stars I was not born a German. We

were not close enough to see any actual brutality going on, but little groups of men were constantly screamed and cursed at, and they told their own tale, together with the way in which the poor fellows were worked to death. One old German N.C.O. used to carry a stick with a long piece of rope on the end of it which he used as a whip.

For twelve hours a day, including Sundays, those wretched recruits were on the drill ground, in all weathers, lying on their stomachs learning musketry. The rain, snow, or sleet made no difference. They were not allowed overcoats, and it was whispered to us from our own guards that they had no change of clothing. For three and sometimes four nights a week they could be seen or heard doing night operations as well on the same ground. Sometimes these operations were lit up by night flares or rockets. Many of the recruits went off to the front after nine weeks of this intensive training.

The general routine for the day at Bischofswerda was as follows: *Appell* (or roll-call) 6.45 A.M., outside on the parade ground; then breakfast at eight o'clock, consisting of a cup of hot coffee, say third-rate, and a small roll of white bread, which was quite good; followed by dinner, served between 11.30 and 12.30 in three different parties, only twenty minutes being allowed for each sitting, including clearing away and pre-

paring for the next sitting. This was due to the limited size of the dining-hall, which was only about forty by thirty feet, too small to accommodate three hundred and fifty officers. Dinner, as a rule, consisted of some mince-meat wrapped up in boiled cabbage, served with very nasty sauerkraut. The meat was good, but as it was prepared in this manner nearly every day it became rather monotonous. Sometimes as dessert we got some stewed fruit (it sounds quite nice, but it was n't), or a little cheese, which was always good, also two slices of German K bread, or black bread, quite wholesome, though personally I always disliked it. Supper was at 7.30 or 8.30, consisting of some kind of cold sausages, two more thin slices of the black bread, and a small pat of margarine. *Appell* again at 9.30 completed the day's round.

The reader may not think the rations given either very good or very bad, according to his ideas on the subject of what he thinks officer prisoners should get. He should bear in mind, however, that the officer pays for this ration at the rate of five pounds for a captain and three pounds for a subaltern monthly. Nevertheless, it was, I think, possible to live on the rations as they consisted in 1915 at Bischofswerda. Anyhow, whatever the food might be, the fact that it was served up in a cleanly manner was half the battle. At the same time it must be understood that the German rations did

not remain like this after October, 1915, as the allowance for prisoners in meat, potatoes, and bread gradually declined, until the weekly meat ration dropped to seventy-five grammes or about two and two-thirds ounces, potatoes dropping in proportion. The bread remained the same weight, but was of an inferior quality.

The commandant, whose name was Ivenstein, both annoyed and amused us by turns, though on the whole he might have been very much worse, and he was usually fairly reasonable when sober, which I don't believe he ever was during the week-end. When he attended the early-morning parade, he would shout and scream himself hoarse, calling us, "Schweinhunde, alle die Engländer sind Schweinhunde, meine Herren" (All the English officers are dogs of swine). Latterly he dropped this, since after a visit from the American Commission we complained of being insulted on parade. He was rather heavily "strafed" from Headquarters.

Taking it all round, as I said before, we might have had a very much worse commandant, his bark always being worse than his bite. The man who acted as interpreter for the British officers did not help to make our dealings with the commandant any easier, since he was both a swine and an idiot, could hardly speak English, and directly insulted us on every possible oc-

casion, though he was only a private. Although hundreds of complaints were sent to the commandant, no notice was ever taken.

One day I received the magazine called "The Captain" from home. According to the rules it had to be censored by the interpreter before it could be received by the officer to whom it was sent. After a week had elapsed I naturally asked the interpreter for it. His reply was that I could not be allowed to have it, since it contained a story about war: which was quite true — it dealt with the Napoleonic campaign! My answer to this futile objection was "Damnation!" The next day I was had up in front of the commandant and given twenty-four hours in cells for saying "God damn the German nation," which was the interpretation of my "Damnation" given to the commandant by the interpreter. Although one of the senior field officers, who spoke German perfectly, went to the commandant on my behalf and explained that "Damnation" did not mean any such thing, he refused to doubt the word of his interpreter, and I did my twenty-four hours! The twenty-four hours was rather a quiet rest, as a matter of fact, and I enjoyed it; but the gross injustice of the thing was a typical case of what an officer had to put up with.

However, we eventually got this interpreter removed, principally through the above case being

brought under the notice of the American Commission on their next visit. But we only jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire, since we got another interpreter, this time in the shape of an officer, who turned out to be very much worse. Sometimes I have it in my heart to pity the latter, since there are two or three French officers and half a dozen British who are waiting for him after the war, and then I think he will have a short shrift. About this time all the officers were again warned for inoculation, both for typhus and cholera, but the operation was carried out in a very much gentler manner than on the previous occasion.

I have explained that the baths at Bischofswerda were situated on the ground floor, but not that the bathroom windows looked out on the exercise-ground. One day a Canadian officer taking his walk round the wire, rather early, played a practical joke on an English officer who was taking his bath rather late. The Canadian, seeing the clothes and towel of some fellow heaped on the window-ledge, stole up, pulled them through into the exercise-square, and then retired to the opposite side of the square to watch the fun.

Soon the man in the bath discovered his loss, and located his towel and clothing outside. Without hesitation, he jumped through the window in his birthday rig-out. Holy Moses! He jumped almost on top of the

pompous commandant who came suddenly around the corner of the building!

It is necessary for the reader's enjoyment to explain that across the exercise-square and outside the wire were situated the German married quarters, on a balcony of which could usually be seen the commandant's wife and family. For once, the commandant treated the thing just as it deserved and certainly got one over on the English officer.

The commandant did not yell or storm or order him to clamber back into the bathroom. Oh, no. He was really humorous. He simply gave one significant look at the married quarters, saw evidences of female flutter, and then ordered the Englishman to walk right down the exercise-ground, in full view of everybody, naked as he was born, into the barracks, down the corridor in front of the guards and into his own Bureau. There he sent for the officer's clothes, and gave him twenty-four hours in the cells.

When I was gleefully told the details I said, "Well, all I can say is, 'Bully for the commandant!' He's got a sense of humor anyway. Was he drunk or sober? Must have been drunk. These fellows don't know the meaning of real humor. But I say, I would have loved to have seen old B—— stalking along like that — he's such a skinny brute."

CHAPTER V

MY JOURNEY TO CLAUSTHAL

In order to show up the general attitude of treatment of British prisoners, I must, however reluctantly, become more personal and relate the manner in which my wounds were treated. After all, one judges people by one's personal experience of them, and no one can be responsible for the opinions of others. On my arrival from Munden my ankle was practically well, but the pain in my chest was growing worse daily. To add to this, I had broken out in abscesses and running sores, having about eighteen on my body at one time. These abscesses, since I had never had such a thing before, were probably due to the bad food at Munden, and the very low condition I was reduced to, owing to much pain and very little sleep for some months. The running sores, however, were caused by the lice in the hospital-room at Munden. Yet, when we arrived at Bischofswerda, in so many ways such an excellent camp in comparison to others in Germany, there was no doctor there. A doctor did appear once in about fourteen days, and then he seldom had time to visit me, although I was quite bedridden at the time. After I had been there about six weeks I did get some attention from a French

doctor who had been taken prisoner; but as the medicines he could get hold of were very limited, he was not able to do much.

I was still in bed at the end of June before the German doctor paid me a visit. I was then almost free from the abscesses, owing to having lived almost entirely on lettuce and green food, which I had been able to buy from the canteen; but his diagnosis as to the pain in my right side, back, and chest was rheumatism, since the ribs which had been so badly smashed were bound to be in a very delicate condition. He could not account for the amount of blood I brought up daily in my sputum, but said it was nothing, and that all I wanted was to get up and walk about. Well, I'm not a doctor, so I suppose he knew his job, and although very weak I made the effort, and gradually went about the camp like any one else. In July I started to play tennis, but soon found that any sort of violent exercise caused me to bring up far greater quantities of blood, besides giving great pain. All this time I could neither lie nor sleep on the right side, or at times even bear to have my tunic buttoned. Soon after the doctor advised me to get up and walk about, he gave me some stuff for rheumatism — aspirin, I think.

At the end of July, 1915, this doctor left, and then a permanent doctor was appointed, who visited the camp daily between 10.30 and 12.30, Sundays excepted. To

him I carried my aches and pains. Without examining me he looked up the report of the last doctor, and said, "Oh, yes — rheumatism and gout"; he said the blood-spitting was nothing, and that I was not to take too violent exercise; and although I visited him on and off every few days I never got any change out of him.

About this time a traveller from a big firm of camera-makers arrived at the camp, and with the commandant's permission several orders were given, so many of the officers being not only rather keen on photography, but wishing to be able to take and send home some snaps of everyday scenes in our prison camp. Three other fellows and myself bought a really good reflex camera, and a lot of very decent photos were taken with it. Unfortunately, as far as I was concerned, the camera only arrived the day before I was ordered away.

On September 3, 1915, I was ordered to pack up my trucks, as I was being removed to Clausthal in Hartz for medical treatment, and on the following morning off I went with my bag and baggage to Clausthal, under the guard of an officer and a man. I had a very pleasant journey up through Dresden, Leipzig, Munden, and Halle to Clausthal, situated in the Hartz Mountains, surrounded by very pretty country. We spent the first night at Munden, and reached Clausthal the following day. At some station between Leip-

zig and Munden we changed on to another line. The German officer took me to one of the men's waiting-rooms, ordered some food, placed a guard over me, and left us — probably to go and get a good fat dinner himself somewhere. Shortly after he went a troop of about twelve French Tommies came in under guard, looking very bedraggled and miserable. They were made to sit down on the floor in a corner, and looked so pinched and thin that I determined, if possible, to help them if I could, should they happen to be short of food for the want of a little money; so I went over and spoke to them, but was immediately stopped by the guard, who explained that any sort of communication between prisoners was *verboten*.

Resuming my seat at the table, I began to puzzle out the problem, and after some time I solved the difficulty. Just before I left Bischofswerda a Russian officer who was with me in the sick-room had given me a box of Russian cigarettes, and by good luck I had them in my pocket. Everybody knows that Russian cigarettes have a hollow mouthpiece about an inch and a quarter long. Tearing a fifty-mark bill in half, and carefully rolling the two halves into the shape and size of the mouthpiece, I inserted the pieces into the mouthpiece of two cigarettes. It took some time to do this, since my hands had to work underneath the table, whilst I was apparently reading my book, which

was lying open on the table. When the cigarettes were complete, I filled my case with Russian cigarettes, and offered one to each of the guards, keeping my thumb carefully on the two prepared cigarettes. They were accepted with gusto by the guard. When they had lit up, I asked permission to give some to the French prisoners, and having accepted them themselves they could hardly refuse. I distributed two or three; then offered the remaining two in the case to the most intelligent-looking, at the same time saying, "Cherchez." To my disgust he looked absolutely blank. But when the German officer returned to take me away, he rose, saluted, and said, "Au revoir, mon lieutenant, et merci beaucoup." The officer fortunately could not speak French and asked me what he said. I replied, "Only a respectful greeting from a private to an officer."

Whilst waiting on the platform for the train which was to take us to Munden, two German Red Cross trains steamed slowly through the station, both of which were distinctly marked on the top and sides with the revered cross of the Geneva Convention. Yet both trains carried six brand-new field guns apiece, with ammunition-wagons attached. Both trains were also decorated along their whole length with laurel and other green boughs, and filled with a crowd of merry soldiery, so that they were most certainly bound for the front.

"Surely these guns must be some mistake?" I thought. "Or is this the way Germany takes her guns into action with safety?"

I must pause a minute to describe our arrival at Munden, as it was a phenomenal sight to me. On approaching our old prison it appeared much the same as when we left it in April, but on entering a revelation was in store for me. To start with, the eating-hall was considerably cleaned up, many new tables and chairs provided, the tables covered with white oil-cloth, and pictures executed by different artistic, Russian officers, hung round the walls. Afterwards I visited the British officers and found there were four new ones lately captured. But the room! Wonder of wonders! There were chests of drawers, a wardrobe, extra tables, and chairs, only five or six beds in rooms that had held nine in our time, and only nine in those that had held seventeen! But it was in going out into the yard that I nearly fainted with surprise. To start with, there was a long wooden shed built out from the eating-hall, erected by the American Y.M.C.A., and very comfortably furnished with tables and chairs. This room acted as a sort of recreation-room on wet days. But the yard! What had been a sloppy, sliding mess of mud and a few trees was transformed into a ripping garden; grand paths ran here and there, and I've seen many flower-beds at Hampton Court inferior to those at Munden,

which were well kept and artistically laid out. To cap it all, the yard had been enlarged by wiring in the ground for two tennis courts laid at the Boche expense, level cinder courts, with a good roller and all the rest of the paraphernalia necessary to a hard court. Also a dry canteen and store had been erected, both under the management of the officers, and things were running smoothly and satisfactorily. I even saw some eggs.

My readers must forgive my divergence from my story, but it was such an astounding revelation to me to see what could be done with a really bad camp like Munden, and I desire particularly to draw attention to it, since it was entirely brought about by the American Ambassador, and so clearly pointed out the endeavors in certain German quarters to produce a good impression on the Americans. It was all eyewash from the beginning to end — eyewash for the Americans. In so far as the latrines were concerned, they were no better. No one could alter them, though even there the difference was very marked, since Munden at that time only held between five and six hundred instead of over a thousand prisoners.

To continue the account of my travels to Clausthal, the officer and man were exceedingly polite and very considerate, and heavily strafed some civilians who jeered at me, calling the usual "Schweinhund!" There

was one humorous episode on the way up at Leipzig, where we had lunch. On the table was a Worcester sauce bottle, on the printed label of which had been pasted the words "Gott strafe England." I nearly cried with laughter — real Worcester sauce from England and "Gott strafe England"! It's one of the richest jokes I've heard of. On pointing it out to the officer he could not see the joke.

I wonder if the reader remembers that I started on my journey in Germany, wounded, in a cattle-truck. From cattle-trucks we were promoted to fourth-class carriages, and now to second-class. Later I shall tell of how we occasionally travelled first class. This was in keeping with everything else. Prisoners taken in the spring of 1915 grumbled at their treatment. Had they been taken in 1914 they would have had more to complain of. Throughout my imprisonment one thing was absolutely clear — the longer the war went on, and the farther the hopes of ultimate victory receded from the German mind, the better treatment their prisoners received. I don't refer to food, as, though they allowed us to buy food in 1915, they can't do that now, since they have not got the food to sell. They cannot give what they have not got; but when the Boches thought they were going to break through at Verdun in February and March, 1916, things were very hard and uncomfortable for the prisoners. On the other hand, our

victory on the Somme brought us all sorts of little concessions.

The Boche is before all things a bully. If he's winning, he bullies; if he's losing, he is polite and oily. A good idea of their pettiness is shown by the fact that, having allowed us to buy maps at Bischofswerda in 1915, showing the actual fighting fronts in both Europe and the East, they were confiscated when the offensive on the Somme looked as if it might be successful. This was done in order that the prisoners might not have the satisfaction of recording the British and French gains on the maps, on which we had kept a record of the struggle in the usual manner with wool and little flags pinned through. Some months after the advance on the Somme, when the news was no longer an exhilarating tonic to the prisoners, these maps were returned, curiously enough at a time when the Boches had made a small but successful counter-attack. This confiscation of maps happened on more than one occasion, but, much to the disgust of the Boches, it always bucked us up quite a lot, since we felt sure that the cause must be that the Allies had made some sort of a gain somewhere, although the German papers might give no news of it.

On arrival at the station at Clausthal there was actually a cab to drive us to the camp! This princely treatment almost dumbfounded me. Of course I was

being sent to Clausthal as an invalid for treatment, so perhaps I should have taken it for granted; but our previous experience did not allow us to look forward to being treated in any sort of human manner. I had to pay very heavily for the cab. The camp at Clausthal turned out to be an old hotel, one of the examples of German architecture so often to be seen in that part of Germany, pretentious and jerry-built. A garden, surrounded by the usual wire fences and sentry patrols, enclosed a more or less square exercising-ground of about one hundred yards in length. More than half the hotel was taken up by a large court-room, with a small stage. This was the Biergarten of the hotel, and was utilized as the general eating-hall and canteen, where all the meals were served, and where the prisoners passed their time when indoors. The remaining portion of the hotel was divided into bedrooms of varying size and comfort.

On the whole Clausthal was perhaps one of the best camps in Germany, though certainly not equal to Bischofswerda. At the same time the commandant and staff in general were always very polite and correct, and not generally insulting and bullying, as at Bischofswerda. Along one side of the eating-hall described above ran a series of wooden screens, forming a number of tea-rooms, evidently built for greater privacy. Curtains hung on ropes divided these boxes from the vulgar gaze

of the people in the centre of the hall. These boxes served as sleeping-rooms for a number of officers, four in each box. To one of these I was allotted, and a very cold and horribly draughty spot it was. I found there over twenty British officers, who immediately on my arrival pounced on me for the latest news; but when they found out that I was a 1914, like themselves, a groan of despair went up. The next morning I saw the commandant, who did not seem to know where I had come from, so it was necessary to explain that I had been sent to undergo a course of treatment for rheumatism and gout, affecting me in the region of my wound. "What!" he said, "you've come here for treatment for rheumatism!" and laughed sarcastically. "You could not come to a worse place for it. We've no treatment here of any sort — never had. There is not even a hospital here, only a sick-room, which a doctor from the town visits for half an hour daily; but you had better see the doctor when he comes to-day."

When I saw the doctor and told him that the doctor at Bischofswerda had diagnosed my case as rheumatism settled in the regions of the wound, he did not seem to agree, but of course would not say so. The only comment he made was that he thought I was in need of an operation to extract whatever it was that might be causing the trouble. I have not mentioned that at the bottom of the exercise-ground, outside the wire,

extended both to the right and left two small lakes, extremely picturesque, but of course the mist which rose off them night and morning was not exactly the best thing for any sort of lung trouble. The consequence was that within a week of my arrival I was confined to the sick-room with a sort of congestion, which grew worse instead of better, until one day the doctor applied to the authorities in Berlin to have me removed again to Bischofswerda, from where I had originally come. The transfer took three months to get through, but eventually, at the end of November, I again returned to Bischofswerda and my old friends.

The principal complaint at Clausthal was the lack of baths. Fancy an hotel without bathrooms! What dirty beasts the Boches must be. The officers had to make their ablutions as best they could in large tin pails, a most unsatisfactory way of washing. Also the lavatory accommodation was not nearly adequate for the two hundred odd officers there. The consequence was it was continually out of order. Last, but certainly not least, the restricted area for exercise. After my escape to England a gentleman once said to me, "Oh, yes, Clausthal; I once read about it. A fine camp with extensive grounds. You had a golf-course there, had you not?" "Well, there was a golf-course," I replied. "But have you ever tried to play over a nine-hole course contained within a boundary of one hundred

yards square, and kid yourself you are playing golf?" Only prisoners are capable of such philosophy. "Make the best of it," is their motto; and so they did. There was as much excitement over a morning's round of golf there as if they were playing at Sunningdale; but, believe me, a far better and more exciting course could be made at Piccadilly Circus. There you have the first tee, say, at the corner outside Swan & Edgar's, and a really pretty mashie shot over the line of motor-buses usually to be seen there. Probably you land in the fountain and lose a stroke, but eventually, with varying fortune, you make the first hole in the entrance to the Pavilion! Possibly you hit the big commissionnaire or the policeman. They'd be very wroth, but not so angry as a Russian or French general strolling round the dilapidated flower-beds at Clausthal. They loathed golf and the very name of it; but the Britishers played on. Oh, yes, we had "some" golf-course at Clausthal!

The reader must not think I'm trying to be funny. I'm not, but I am endeavoring to bring home the fact that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, when the people at home hear of such luxuries as golf-courses, etc., in prison camps in Germany, they are apt to remark that the prisoners are not so badly treated after all. "Why, they are even allowed to play golf!" which immediately brings up a picture of fellows ranging over the country, more or less having a good time.

Take, for example, the fact that I was removed from Bischofswerda for special treatment for rheumatism and gout. In October, 1915, it was officially published in England that I had been removed to the Hartz Mountains for treatment. Eyewash, nothing more! What else could it be, since we have seen that on arrival at Clausthal it was a very bad place for people suffering from rheumatism, and that they had no method of treatment or ever had? Yet a list of officers was reported officially through Switzerland to England as having been sent there for treatment. As I appeared on that list, I know what I'm talking about. People at home thought and said, "The kindly Germans are even sending their prisoners to the Hartz Mountains, the most beautiful part of Germany, in order to cure them of their rheumatism, poor things!"

The feeding at Clausthal was in one way much better than at Bischofswerda; that is to say, the actual rations were more plentiful, of better quality, and better cooked; but, on the other hand, in so far as being able to order and buy food one could get infinitely more at the latter place. Drinks, however, were cheaper and better at Clausthal. Of course I'm speaking of 1915, when we could get something to drink if the commandant allowed. Personally I did very well in the way of food at Clausthal, more especially when I was in the sick-room, since two British majors prepared

and brought me all my food. I got very uppish over that, for it is not often a junior sub. has two regular majors to wait on him hand and foot. Some day I hope to be able to repay their great kindness.

Two or three days before leaving Clausthal I bought from the canteen a large pannier basket to hold all my belongings, as on the way from Bischofswerda my box had been rather badly smashed up. I mention the basket here because it had a rather interesting future. When the day arrived for me to return to Bischofswerda, my baggage having been packed by one of our officers, I took leave of some of the cheeriest and best fellows that it has ever been my lot to meet, and was driven, at an early hour of the morning, to the station at Clausthal. The cabman charged me seven marks for a three-quarter-mile drive; but still I did not have to walk, so I suppose I should not grumble. Before leaving, my luggage was, as usual, very carefully searched, though what awful weapon they thought I could possibly have got hold of and secreted, goodness knows.

The journey back was more or less uneventful, except that this time I had as a guard one N.C.O. and one man, both of whom were respectful enough, but neither of whom gave me much chance of escape. Had I been strong enough at that time, I certainly could have killed them both at one period of the journey and made my escape through the guard's van, in which

was the guard. On this occasion we were travelling fourth-class, probably because it was not an officer who was conducting me, in which case it goes to prove that prisoners are not sent first or second class because they are officers, but for the comfort of the conducting German officer. This fourth-class carriage was built on the same coach as the guard's van, and I did not feel that I was strong enough to cope with two of them silently enough without disturbing the guard. It was night and pitch-dark, the train only running about fifteen miles an hour, and I'd never had such a chance before. However, after my long period in bed, I felt I could not tackle the job satisfactorily, since failure would have meant the end of me.

At Leipzig I was conducted to one of the German private mess-rooms. It was evidently a sort of general mess for any N.C.O. or private, as it was filled with all kinds of different regiments, Saxons, Prussians, and Bavarians, each lounging at different tables. I spent nearly two hours there, and had a very interesting time — interesting from the point of view of German interior dissensions. The Bavarians scowled at the Prussians and Saxons, and would not answer even if spoken to by either of these. It chanced that there were three long tables in the rooms, only two of them occupied by the Saxons, and the other by the Bavarians. I was conducted to their table by my guard and some food

ordered for me. A little later on several Prussians entered, looked at the table of the Saxons and Bavarians, saw plenty of vacant places, but discussed openly that they were not going to feed at the same table with those fellows. Seeing me sitting at the third table, they came over and saluted and asked permission to be seated, which was of course cordially given; one of them even addressed me, asking when I had been taken prisoner. One would have thought that, if they objected to the sight of Bavarians and Saxons, they would have fumed at seeing one of the hated Englanders in their own mess, but such was not the case.

The night before my return to Bischofswerda, one of the Canadian officers, a major, escaped. I cannot say how, since everybody in the camp seemed to have a different story, and as I was not there at the time, myself, it would only be supposition. One thing I do know, however, and it is quite worth the telling. The morning after the major's escape, when his absence at call-over had been discovered by the Boches, the commandant, in a wild fury, sent up one of his officers to the major's room. The officer hauled out an old and dirty pair of socks belonging to the major. These were formally presented in the courtyard to the commandant's bloodhound, who, after sniffing at the socks, died in convulsions — at least, that is what I was told! As a matter of fact, the dog was brought out with great

ceremony by the commandant and presented with the socks to smell. Immediately he quietly subsided on the ground and turned his head in the opposite direction, absolutely refusing to have anything to do with the socks or their departed owner. The commandant, in great chagrin, had to bear the taunting smiles of his prisoners.

Some six weeks later, we had the splendid news that the major had gotten over into Denmark in safety. He was the second Britisher to escape since the beginning of the war. Oh, what a night that was! My countrymen, one and all, lined up in the canteen. By a little judicious "palm grease" we managed to get hold of some filthy imitation beer in which to drink the health of the gallant major, after which we had songs — "For he's a jolly good fellow," and others — screamed at the top of our lungs. At the end of the second song, the German guard came in, and tried to haul us out, but we did n't care — old P—— had gotten over the border! Eventually it took the commandant himself to come in and turn us out, and even then we shouted out song after song in our rooms, until well past midnight. Of course we got a "strafe," but what did that matter? Old P—— had gotten over, and we did n't give a damn!

I arrived at Bischofswerda just after midnight. The next day I found things much the same as before, ex-

cept that the ration given by the Boches had greatly diminished during my absence, also the amount and variety of the food we had previously been able to buy. Eggs had completely disappeared, and the bread had deteriorated very much. "Ha, ha!" I thought, "the Boches are feeling the pinch of the Mistress of the Seas"; so we cheerfully did without the things we had had. However, the parcels from home had been coming in well, in preparation for Christmas, so we did ourselves pretty well on the whole.

Within a few days of my return to Bischofswerda the cameras which we had purchased with the permission of the commandant were confiscated again. This was quite in keeping with everything else the Boches did. We would be allowed to buy things, and soon afterwards they would be taken away. In other words, as soon as they had got the money out of you, an order to confiscate would come from the commandant. He was very sorry, but his orders came from higher up! Such things as drawing-pens, fret-work, and small chip-carving tools, maps, spirit-stoves, and last, but not least, the camera. Of course the order never came from higher up, as I have certain information that cameras were allowed in other camps up till 1917.

The confiscation of articles legitimately bought in the canteen was only part of a system of petty measures practised against the prisoners. They soon dis-

covered that, as far as the Britisher was concerned, nothing upset him so much or made him more disheartened than cutting off his baths. So for every little excuse possible, such as Russian, French, or British officers failing to give a smart enough salute to a German second lieutenant, the baths would be cut off for a day or two; or, failing that, football would be prohibited, or any sort of game the officers might be trying to amuse themselves with. Shorts — football breeches — would be confiscated. To do the latter a general search of the rooms was necessary. Of course, this always caused a certain amount of excitement, since everybody had something to hide — an electric torch, pieces of rope, money, and whatever the Boches might happen to be after at the time.

These searches took place periodically, about every six weeks, I should say. Sometimes everybody would be suddenly herded out of the buildings, and search made while all the prisoners were in the courtyard, in the hope of finding things forbidden carelessly left about.

These periodical searches for forbidden articles were exasperating. To be hauled from one's room, to be made to line up in fours in the corridors until such time as one's rooms or person had been searched, became very tedious. But looking back upon these searches, there was nearly always some little humorous

incident which lit up the event, and gave us something to talk and laugh over.

One night we were suddenly hauled out into the corridor, at about nine o'clock. Some of the officers had already gone to bed, which necessitated their throwing a coat over their pyjamas in order to attend the muster. One Canadian wag, hearing that it was to be a personal search, took his pyjamas off, and simply put a coat on.

As it happened, on this particular occasion, the search was being made by one of the German orderly officers. As he came down the line, we were made to open our coats in order that he might go through our pockets. When it came to the turn of the Canadian, he just stepped forward one pace, threw his coat off, and stood there as naked as when he came into the world. A howl of joy went up from the prisoners. The German officer went as red as a turkey cock, completely lost his head, and it was some time before he, or his guard, could quiet the delighted prisoners.

More often, however, when early morning parades came, the Boches would keep us outside and search the rooms whilst we were on parade; and very successful they were, but not generally with the British. Very few British officers were discovered with forbidden articles. A suit of mufti clothes or two was about all, and a few newspaper cuttings; but the Russians and

sometimes the French would have whole escaping outfits caught in a single haul. Probably this was due to the fact that the camp was surrounded with spies, and as the Russians were all together, and not mixed up with the British as at Munden, the chances of betrayal from outside the British community were *nil*. We very often had French officers mixed in with us, but seldom any Russians. There is absolutely no harm in my stating here that the Russians were infested with spies, and they knew it and talked about it quite openly. One or two of them were marked out for destruction after the war.

There were numerous attempts to escape from the end of 1915 to the middle of 1916; but, curiously enough, when all the arrangements were complete, and the attempt ready to be made, the Boche guard would suddenly be doubled, or a Boche raid made on that particular room at the last moment, and probably all the paraphernalia caught. It happened too many times for coincidence.

One of the few bright spots of my time at Bischofswerda were the periodical visits of the Reverend Mr. Williams, who came once every three or four months to the camp, and held Divine service for us. Mr. Williams was the pastor of the English Church in Berlin when war broke out. He was allowed to remain in Germany, under certain restrictions, and went from

prison camp to prison camp. I don't think any of us were particularly religious, but Mr. Williams was always so bright and hopeful. One could not help catching a little of his cheerfulness, and I think I can speak for all of us in saying that we looked forward to his visits very much and felt the better for his coming. Also we sincerely hope that on the conclusion of peace the authorities at home will recognize and befittingly reward his services, since no man ever carried forward work under more difficult and disagreeable circumstances — slighted and distrusted by the German civilians, leading a life of complete isolation in the enemy's country, exceedingly short of food. Indeed, on his latter visits to us, he usually had had no food for twenty-four hours. One day, when we got permission for him to take a meal with us, pending the arrival of the train to take him to another camp, he ate with much gusto some eggs from home, the first he had seen for many months. Notwithstanding all the obstacles put in his way, he continued to pass from camp to camp on this kindly pilgrimage.

CHAPTER VI

COURT-MARTIALLED AND INSULTED

I HAVE now reached a point in my narrative which dates us back to a few days before Christmas, 1915, when we learned that the German canteen was to be done away with, from which hitherto we had been able to get so much food, in order to augment both our parcels from home and the greatly diminished Boche rations, and that hereafter we should be more or less dependent on our parcels. Some of my readers may find this quite an interesting point, as it indicates the period when the Boches really began to feel the shortage of foodstuffs. After my escape, many people continually asked me, "Are the Germans really as short of food as the papers say?" My reply to this was, "Yes, only a jolly sight harder up than the papers say."

The old canteen was finally abolished with the advent of New Year's Day, 1916; and since the woman and her husband who had hitherto run the canteen also ran the whole show, they had a terrific amount of stuff to remove — all the kitchen utensils necessary to run a mess for three hundred and fifty officers. We had a little hand in the removal, as I will explain. Early in the morning of Christmas Day a Canadian officer came

to me and asked me for the loan of my big basket before mentioned, also for some money, as he knew me to be in possession of a certain amount. His idea was to get into the basket, let himself be carried down by a couple of the British orderlies, and deposited outside the kitchen door with some dozens of other packages, amongst them a couple of baskets of similar type full of linen and plates. Accordingly we got him into the basket, called up the orderlies, and gave them orders where to deposit the baskets. All went well; the orderlies carrying the basket passed the sentries without trouble, since most of the orderlies had been detailed to help the canteen people remove their stuff. A couple of large vans were standing at the guard-room gate, being rapidly filled with the packages, when my basket's turn came. It was evidently too heavy, and unfortunately a Boche orderly came out of the kitchen that moment and offered to give a hand. Just as he was about to lift it the Canadian officer wriggled or made some movement. Anyway, the Boche suggested looking inside in case of a cat or something being there, though he had absolutely no suspicion of a prisoner whatever. Proceeding to the kitchen to fetch the key, as it was padlocked, they discovered that the basket did not belong to the canteen people at all. Immediately they started to cut it open, and inside of course they discovered the "Jack-in-the-box," who rose up

with a wild yell. The Boches nearly died from heart failure.

However, they collared him and all his paraphernalia, also the money, which he was not quick enough to get rid of. He was taken to the commandant in the usual fashion, and stripped naked, whilst they even ripped up the seams of his tunic in their frantic efforts to discover some forbidden article or evidence against another person, as accessory before the fact.

As his trial, and incidentally mine, proceeded, it was clearly evident that the Boches suspected that we had been helped by the guard or some German in the camp. There was absolutely no evidence to prove this, and no reason for their suspicions whatever, but the Boche authorities were most positive about it, so much so that the wretched canteen people were arrested the day after their departure, and shoved in a little jail in Dresden, pending the examination of the court-martial. We chuckled over this, since the canteen people were absolutely innocent, and had grown rich at our expense in the past. Shortly after the first inquiry the basket was traced to me, and then the fun started. The commandant insisted that I had given the Canadian the basket for the purpose of escape. I said I had n't; that I had been merely asked for the loan of the basket, and that as I was not in need of it at the time I had naturally complied, and that British officers

were not in the habit of asking their friends what they wanted to do with articles which were lent to them.

After this, for a day or two, the affair, in so far as I was concerned, blew over. Of course the Canadian officer was confined to cells. One day I was again called up, and informed that I had not only given the basket, but also five hundred marks to the Canadian. Of course I asked them to prove it; then they produced a written statement from the Canadian, acknowledging that I had given him the five hundred marks, after which it was no longer any use denying the fact. They extracted this information by telling the Canadian that the officer who had given him the basket had also owned up to giving him five hundred marks. Their object was to convict the Canadian of the serious charge of bribing the guards, which was being brought against him. Like an idiot, he fell into the trap, and so we both got caught.

In a few days the members of the court-martial arrived — a full colonel, equal to a brigadier with us, a major, and a captain — and a court of inquiry was held forthwith, when I was accused of having bought the basket a few weeks before in the canteen. This being so, it was alleged I purchased it for the purpose of escaping or aiding others to do so, but I was told that, if I would make a clean breast of the affair, they would try to make my punishment as light as possible.

Very oily they tried to be; but I was not going to be taken in by soft words. Then I was accused of providing the money. Both the money and the basket I explained satisfactorily; but the verdict was that, seeing I was incapable of behaving myself in a good camp, I should be sent away for punishment. "Now," I said, "I will just show you to what extent you Germans are capable of miscarrying justice. I did not buy that basket three weeks ago, nor did I buy it in the canteen," at which a general smile passed round the court, and the canteen record-book was brought forth, showing the date, etc., when I bought the basket. The accusation of falsehood was then added to the list of my other crimes. I then started to prove that I purchased the basket over three months ago at the camp at Clausthal. So convincing was my evidence that the court closed, pending inquiry from Clausthal. The report which came back endorsed my statement. In the end they could bring nothing tangible against me except the money, which I explained by showing them a cheque written on the 1st of January, 1916, from the Canadian officer in exchange for five hundred marks in money, which, as I explained, I had no use for myself. Finding some one who had, I naturally exchanged it for a cheque which I could send home. Thus in so far as I was concerned the affair blew over. The Canadian was, however, removed from Bischofswerda, and later to

Switzerland, having been sent there owing to ill health, probably brought about by bad conditions in the camp he was sent to.

Perhaps it is worth while mentioning that we tried our best to make New Year's Day a cheery one, and almost succeeded in making ourselves believe we were having a good time. Since the canteen had been broken up each room cooked and prepared its own dinner, so between Christmas puddings from home and all sorts of luxuries we certainly had a good feed. We had also been able to get permission to buy a little wine — awful stuff, but heady. The result was that a little pent-up energy was let loose in breaking each other's beds. The beds at Bischofswerda were roughly constructed wooden ones, with wooden bed-slats, on which rested a straw palliasse. By taking a run and jump and landing immediately on top of the mattress, the whole thing broke with a beautiful rending crash, sweet music to the ears of a prisoner whose energies and spirits have always to be under constant restraint. Of course there was the devil to pay with the Boches, and the bill rendered by them on the following morning was terrific. All sorts of new rules and regulations came out with regard to the beds, such as "It is forbidden to sit or take exercise on the beds." This was quite amusing, since there were not enough chairs to go round, so I presume we were supposed to recline on the floor. Also

football was prohibited for a few days, and there were sundry other "strafes." Personally I was not able to join in the bed-breaking competition, but to see others venting their feelings was the next best thing.

The New Year, 1916, was welcomed by us all as a joyous advent, since we felt quite sure in our own minds that victory must crown our arms before the year was out, and that we should once more be able to call our souls our own. What optimistic feelings we had when, as week after week went by, the German food rations became shorter and less wholesome. Seeing that we could no longer buy food from the canteen, we thought the end must be in sight.

We were now almost entirely dependent on our parcels from home. Should they have been lost or delayed in the post things would have gone very badly with us. Fortunately our parcels arrived both frequently and regularly. This surprised us very much, seeing that we had had many opportunities for discovering that the Boches themselves were getting perilously hard up for food of every kind. We had expected that a great number would have been either stolen or rifled. In a few cases there were a few things extracted, but not as a general rule, which speaks well for the German postal officials.

I have already referred to the Boche lieutenant who acted as official interpreter to the French and British,

and of how he tried to make our conditions harder to bear than they were already. It is difficult to lay a direct and plausible charge against this swine, but every one can easily understand that in a life such as ours it was the little things which preyed upon the mind, the petty insults and ill-treatment. The very way this man Harbe said "Good-morning" was an insult. Some of us used to receive the periodical called "The Play," which everybody is acquainted with. Harbe would confiscate this from all parcels, on the ground that the morals of the British and French officers were so bad that the German authorities felt it their duty to supervise the literature in the cause of "Kultur." Harbe would carefully explain this to our faces, and instead of giving him one in the eye for his insolence we had to stand and grind our teeth. Such a speech from a German second lieutenant to a British or French senior officer was of course disgraceful. On several occasions when French officers were writing both to their wives and women friends he interchanged the envelopes. I don't suppose he caused any trouble, but it describes the type of man who more or less ruled our lives at Bischofswerda, a camp which was in most respects quite a good one.

With regard to parcels from home containing books, Harbe would, as I said before, take months to censor them, and then would frequently withhold even such

works as Dickens or other harmless books. When official searches took place, this beast made offensive comments on the photographs of one's relations; and when large parcels came from home of foodstuffs, he would make objection to the amount and the quality of food sent.

"Why, chicken and tongue, that is a luxury, and prisoners are not allowed luxuries. You may have it this time, but you must not send for any more luxuries, or they will be confiscated. You spend too much money on food. Look at me; I live on the ration I receive; why can't you?"

"Well, you see, we have not been brought up that way," was my reply to this question.

Of course I was had up before the commandant for impertinent replies, but on explaining that I had only been defending myself against an attack by Harbe, on the amount and quality of foodstuffs sent from home the commandant dismissed me, and I rather think it was Harbe who got told off. He once said that a prisoner of war was a man in disgrace, who had no rights, and who should not be allowed to amuse himself in any way. He said he ought to be made to feel the shame of his position!

Early in January, 1916, I discovered that if I could procure a large sum of money, it would probably help one or two of us to escape. I wrote home — in code, of

course — for a certain sum of money to be sent secretly in parcels. It was the same method of secret communication referred to before as being so useful in calling for the American Ambassador, and proved equally successful. The money was to be sent in one-hundred-mark notes, concealed in cakes, each cake to contain one hundred marks. It was, of course, hard for my people at home to consent to do this, since they knew how carefully parcels were searched, and how serious a punishment for me would be the outcome if I were caught. However, my mother outweighed her own personal feelings, and did her best to fulfil my wishes. This may sound like sentiment, but I have good reason for recording it here, as after my return I heard scores of prisoners' relatives, to whom I paid visits in order to give them the latest news of their dear ones in Germany, say: "Oh, my dear boy has hinted that we shall send him so-and-so, but you know it must mean that he is going to try to escape. Supposing he should be killed — how terrible for us! We should never forgive ourselves. We could not think of sending him anything of that sort."

These are the thoughtlessly selfish remarks I have continually heard. I wondered if these good people realized that it was not their own lives they were risking. Possibly the member in question was a son, husband, or brother, but whoever it was, it was his own

life, to do with as he thought best; to take what risk he chose. Could the people at home realize what it was for an able-bodied man to be a prisoner during such a war as this? Did they realize that every man who is worth his salt has some spark of ambition, and that that ambition must be absolutely crushed while he is a prisoner? Hundreds mount over his head every day, and he must sit and wait. He is tormented by the thought: "Shall I ever get back to my original position in the service of my country?" His one chance is to escape, and those at home should have laid aside their own feelings in the matter and helped, to the utmost of their ability, those who sent out a smothered cry from the land of the Hun. The writer knows this to be the point of view taken by all prisoners of war.

But to continue. The precious parcels were sent to me and a great number of them arrived safely. The fact that some subsequent parcels were discovered was only due to sheer bad luck, which I shall explain later. All these parcels came from home, sewn in calico, marked in a certain manner, and bearing the English postmark of Salisbury. At Bischofswerda, all the prisoners' parcels were brought to the camp in a large handcart, drawn by our own orderlies; that is to say, the orderlies of all four nationalities incarcerated at Bischofswerda, British, French, Russian, and Belgian. One of these worked on my behalf. From the

top-story windows of the camp one could see for half a mile along the road leading to the station, up which it was necessary for the orderlies and the packages to pass in order to reach the camp. Every morning a lookout was stationed at one of the windows, in order to watch the return of the orderlies with handcart and packages on their way back to the camp between the hours of 9.30 and 10 A.M. every day except Sundays. When the cart passed a certain tall tree which bordered the road well in view of the lookout stationed in the camp, should there be a package as described amongst the prisoners' parcels, one of the orderlies would raise his hat, when immediately the lookout would rush down and inform us. The organization utilized this time to get into line before the advent of the packages. In order that the cart might enter the camp, it had first to pass through the guarded gate of the outer wall. Here it was unloaded, and the packages passed through the second line of wire, into the guardroom, and down the main corridor of the ground floor, to a small room on the left-hand side of the said corridor which was kept by the Boches as a special delivery dépôt. Before reaching this room, which was about sixty yards down the corridor, one had to pass two doors on the right-hand side, the kitchen and the canteen, which were connected by a large sliding window through which officers passed their food from the

canteen to the kitchen to be cooked. Two sentries were posted in the corridors, one at the entrance to the guard-room and the other at the packet-room door. From a sleeping-room situated directly over the guard-room, one could look down on the heads of the orderlies passing through the outer defence gate. Immediately the packages were passed through this gate, an orderly, pushing the cart from behind, arranged the fingers of his hand on the handrail of the cart, so as to indicate the German Post-Office number registered on the parcel. Thus, 237: two fingers of the right hand showing, three fingers of the left hand showing; a pause; then four and three fingers of both hands showing. In the room above I received this signal. I then inscribed this number on a packet which was made to look like the packet conveyed by the orderly below, using a pencil which had been stolen from the commandant during a previous interview with him — a pencil used only by certain German officials.

Before the cart could be unloaded, I was in the canteen with the prepared parcel hidden under my great-coat. The same orderly who gave notice of the post-mark now hurriedly packed the parcels into the arms of a confederate, taking care to place the particular parcel on top of all the others. The confederate with the load of parcels was now passed through the second line of wire, the guard-house, and so on, into the corridor,

where the Boches usually left him to continue with his load to the packet-room. As he proceeded up the corridor towards the packet-room, one of us, watching his chance so as to synchronize with the moment the orderly reached the kitchen door, walked up to the first sentry and asked him a question — foolish, or otherwise. As the orderly with the parcels reached the open kitchen door, he dropped all the parcels, seemingly with a lurch, and quickly kicked my parcel through the kitchen door. Another orderly as quickly kicked back the faked parcel, and hurriedly passed the new one through the window leading to the canteen, where an officer with a large overcoat was waiting. Immediately on receipt of this parcel, he left the canteen and proceeded to his own room, where the parcel was opened and the wrapping put away in hiding in order to be utilized for the next faked parcel.

A cake would be found inside with an oilskin wrapper in the centre containing a thousand or more marks. The sentry, whose attention had been diverted, would, of course, have seen the catastrophe, but would have been quite content when the parcel, kicked into the kitchen, by the stumbling orderly, was, apparently, immediately shot out again.

When the hour for receiving parcels came, I, of course, received my parcels containing tins of food, etc., which I had probably already received some

months previously. Every day a watch for parcels was kept, although there was usually a gap of seven to ten days between each. One could never be sure that, owing to the length of time some parcels took to come, two might not arrive on the same day or within a day or so of one another. In this manner the first parcel was safely received. The second was not so fortunate, as on the arrival of the orderly at the kitchen door, Lieutenant Harbe, the German censor, came out of his room unexpectedly and stood watching the orderlies. The fateful parcel went into the packet-room and was deposited on the distributing table, though next the door. Our reserves who were waiting in the canteen then came on the scene. An officer equipped for the morning ablutions, towel, hair-oil, Odol tooth-wash, etc., left the canteen in accordance with a prearranged signal and proceeded down the corridor towards the bath. Six strides brought him opposite the open door of the packet-room, where stood the sentry, when he dropped everything he had on the stone floor. Harbe rushed out and swore at him for strewing the corridor with broken bottles, soap, sponge, etc. As Harbe rushed out, I and two others walked into the packet-room behind his back. The two others walked up to the two German orderlies in the packet-room, hurriedly engaged them in conversation, whilst I placed the prepared packet on the table. Sliding the new one under my coat, I

turned to the door and found myself confronting Harbe, but he had seen nothing—I had been too quick for him. He asked my business, and I replied that I had come to inquire if another officer might receive my packet, since I had an appointment with the doctor at the hour when they would be distributed. This he refused, so I walked out, packet 2 a triumph certainly, but more than that, a score over Harbe, and in his own department too. It was too delicious, since he thought he was too smart for any of us.

CHAPTER VII

IN HOSPITAL AT DRESDEN

In March a Canadian doctor recently taken prisoner joined us at Bischofswerda, and although the Hague Convention does not allow doctors to be detained prisoners for any length of time, this Canadian was still there when I left in October, some seven months later. However, as far as we were concerned he was a great comfort, since we got some first-hand news as to recent events, and also some valuable medical attention and advice. His diagnosis of my case turned out to be absolutely correct, namely, that my trouble was caused by splinters of the ribs lodged in the right lung; also, owing to the long period it had been left unattended to, then a matter of a year and a half, a chronic pleurotic state had set in. The Canadian doctor had an interview with the German doctor over my case, but the German refused to find anything wrong, though he said that, should the Swiss Commission come, he would put me up for examination before them.

During the last week of May, 1916, we were notified that a visit from the Swiss Commission was shortly expected, in order to collect certain officers for transfer to Switzerland. A list of those whose wounds were bad

enough to allow of inspection by the commission was taken, although all officers suffering from other complaints were actually inspected by the Swiss Commission on its arrival. Great excitement reigned on the day appointed for the visit, which was fated in the end to bring very little consolation. With the exception of one officer, who had been hit in the hand, which he had more or less lost the use of, no other officer was placed on the possible list except myself.

At first the Swiss seemed desirous of taking me, but the German doctors would not hear of it. The outcome of the discussion between them was a compromise, the Swiss insisting that I should undergo a proper examination with Röntgen rays, in order to decide if it was a splinter or something else that caused the trouble. The German doctors said it was quite unnecessary, that I was quite sound, but that, if after examination any sort of operation were necessary, it would have to take place in Germany. The Canadian doctor already mentioned gleaned from a private chat with the Swiss that the reason the Germans refused to let me go was that they were afraid of the questions which would be inevitably asked in Switzerland as to why they had left my lung unattended for the period of a year and a half, without even troubling to have a proper diagnosis made.

So ended the first visit of the Swiss Commission.

Very nearly three weeks elapsed before my orders came for the medical examination, which took place at a town called Bautzen, about twenty-eight miles from Bischofswerda. It is a very large military dépôt, and contains a number of hospitals. To one of them myself and a Canadian officer who came with me were conducted. For some time we sat in the exercise-ground of the hospital, where a number of German wounded soldiers were sitting or walking about. We apparently caused a great deal of interest, but no insult or objectionable looks were given us — in fact, rather the opposite. It is a curious psychological fact that, with regard to those Boches who have actually fought in the front line, they seem to look upon their enemies with far greater respect, which I suppose, after all, is natural, since they have actually seen and felt the magnificent fighting qualities of our troops, and are therefore sceptically inclined towards the articles in their newspapers which continually belittle the strength of our arms. On the other hand, those who are on lines of communication, etc., believe the newspapers, having had no practical experience of their own to balance their reasoning; and, as typical of the Boche character all round, when they feel themselves to be winning or up against a weaker force than their own, they are bullies of the worst possible character.

With regard to the events which took place at the

hospital at Bautzen, after seeing the specialists, immediate arrangements were made for an X-ray examination. The result of this showed our Canadian doctor to be correct. The German specialist then asked me why this had not been attended to before, and why no operation had been made. He said, "In my opinion it must be done at once; at the same time I must warn you that, owing to the length of time which has been allowed to elapse, a considerable growth has naturally taken place over the affected area." He further said that the operation now would be a very dangerous one, and that even were it successful he could not guarantee that I would be any better, and that he would have to ask me to decide there and then if I would undergo it or not. On inquiring as to the probable result if I should not feel inclined to take the risk, he replied, "You may not get any worse, but I shall be surprised if you don't, and I consider that tuberculosis will probably set in, if it has n't done so already."

This opinion decided things for me, so I made a statement in writing that the operation was done by my own wish and at my own risk, since otherwise they would do nothing.

After a further examination my friend and I returned by train to Bischofswerda. About a week later the doctor called me down and explained that the operation was a very dangerous one, and that there would be

still time for me to cry off; the commandant did the same a few days later; but the specialist's threat of tuberculosis decided me absolutely, as there was no possible alternative. If I had the disease, I was done for; if it came through lack of an operation, I was done for; so the only thing to do was to trust to luck. Nearly another month passed before my final orders to go to hospital at Königstein came through, and on the day they arrived I was told to be prepared to go off in three days' time, according to instructions from Berlin.

By the same post one of the packets containing money already mentioned arrived, but unfortunately, owing to sheer bad luck, without our advance guard scouts having any knowledge of it. Up to this particular parcel everything had been completely successful. The misfortune came about in the following manner. A number of British officers had ordered from home large parcels of foodstuffs to be sent by the American Express, since their weight was over that prescribed by the regulations for the British Post-Office.

Unfortunately a large number of these large parcels arrived on the same day, along with a lot of very small parcels such as books, sent singly. All the big parcels were loaded on to the cart as usual by the orderlies, but the small ones were issued in a sack straight from the station. In this sack the parcel from home had also been placed, so that no intimation that a special parcel

had arrived was given by the orderlies. Consequently I went to receive my parcel as usual. To my horror, I found that it contained one of the precious cakes. It was cut open and the little oilskin package discovered. An inquiry was held, but very little information was extracted from me. The commandant said it was a most serious offence, and that the punishment would be very severe. I replied that if there was such a thing as justice in Germany, it would be impossible to hold me responsible for what might happen to be sent me in parcels from England, unless, of course, he could prove that I had asked for the money.

"If you did not ask for it, how does it happen that your mother sends you such a large amount?" he asked. To this I replied that there *was* an excellent reason why she might send money, and of course, he said, "Well, what is the reason?" thinking that I would give myself away. "You see, sir," I replied, "for the past three months we have not been receiving the correct change for our money sent from the bank to your Bureau for our expenses. The lowest exchange at the present time is 137 marks for £5, in fact the mark has dropped 37 per cent, sir." "Yes, yes, go on." "Well, sir, we only get 100 marks for £5, or 37 per cent less than we ought to receive. I consider it most probable that my mother, seeing that we are not being fairly dealt with, has taken this course in order to convey

German money to me at the correct and fair rate." After this I was dismissed pending trial, but since I had been ordered to hospital by higher authorities, I knew that the threatened trial would be a long way off if it ever came.

On the night before I was to have proceeded to the hospital, orders came to the commandant that I was to go to the reserve hospital at Dresden instead of Königstein, where I eventually went. But before leaving I wrote two letters, which I gave to one of my brother officers. These two letters contained an exact account of the treatment, or rather the lack of treatment, of my wound, which was to be delivered only in case of the operation proving fatal. One was addressed to the American Ambassador and the other to my mother.

The journey to Dresden from Bischofswerda was more or less uneventful, with the exception that a cab was actually arranged for in order to convey me and the guard to the station, which, of course, I had to pay for, and for my luggage to Dresden, as, having no guarantee that I would not be starved at the hospital, I had taken my stock of tinned food with me, being too old a prisoner to be caught napping in that respect. The cab and transport cost me about thirty shillings, although Dresden is not much over twenty miles away.

On this journey to Dresden, and in passing through

it on the way to the hospital, I had some excellent opportunities of gauging the aspect of the populace. Sour looks met me everywhere, but no insults. On the whole the people looked overworked and underfed, going about their duties in a morose sort of doggedness. Two of the main squares in Dresden were packed with recruits under training — boys of not more than sixteen or seventeen years, and men who looked over fifty, most of them being undersized and weedy.

The hospital was crammed with wounded German soldiers and a few convalescent officers. It turned out to be an enormous place, with most excellent grounds, bordering the Königsvald, where a regimental band played three times a week. A clean room was allotted to me in one of the wards, and it was a great relief to find that I was to have a private one to myself.

On the morning after my arrival a well-known German specialist visited me in my room, and made a thorough examination of my chest. That afternoon a young German convalescent officer was detailed to take me out for a short walk, which we took in the Königsvald, a very beautiful woodland glen, full of delightful bubbling springs and nice green glades, most refreshing to a prisoner's eyes. The officer was very courteous and sympathetic. That evening, on my return from the walk, I was again visited by the specialist, who said he was glad to be able to inform me that I was

not tubercular, as he had thought I was after his examination that morning; also he explained that, if I would place myself in his hands, he would guarantee that the operation would be performed without any great danger. By this he meant that in my present state an anæsthetic was not advisable, and that if I would consent to undergo it without he would guarantee everything would be all right. On the following morning the operation took place, and it was most beautifully and satisfactorily done. I will not dwell upon my own feelings during the ordeal, since it does not take a vivid imagination to picture them, when one takes into consideration a big operation like this being performed without an anæsthetic.

My treatment generally in hospital in Dresden was of the very best. I could not have been treated better had I been at home, either in the matter of attention or in food. My own nurse was especially attentive, and I shall be eternally grateful to her. This happy state of affairs, however, underwent an extraordinary change on the day Rumania entered the war. Although my nurse remained stanch, the matron of the ward, who had hitherto been quite friendly, came to my room. She shook her fist in my face, called me a Schweinhund Engländer, cursed the English and everything appertaining to them, and caught hold of the bed, shaking it violently, and causing me great pain in the region of

my unhealed wound. She gave orders that I should be cut off from all my invalid food and be given the soldier's rations instead. This was done.

One incident I forgot to mention before, which shows up the extraordinary workings of the Boche mind. In order to have this special operation performed, it had been necessary to give my parole in writing, stating that I would not attempt to escape from the time I left the prison for the hospital to the time I returned from the hospital to the prisoners' camp. Permission to give this parole under the existing circumstances was obtained by me from the senior British officer at Bischofswerda. However, on going to the hospital, I discovered a sentry posted at the door of my room and another outside the window. Of course I immediately complained to the commandant of the hospital that I had given my parole and naturally felt exceedingly insulted at finding two sentries guarding me. He smiled and said the order came from higher up and that he could do nothing.

These two sentries remained on guard until I left the hospital, which is most humorous. Imagine placing two sentries to guard a man lying between life and death with an enormous incision in his chest, in order to prevent him escaping should he break his parole! I should *only* have had to walk four hundred and fifty miles in order to escape — this for one who had not

even the strength to feed himself. What must the word of a German officer be worth, if he accepts another man's parole and then takes steps to guard against its being broken?

At this time I was interested to note that in the hospitals, as in the trenches, the German psychology of mind seems to be the same; that is to say, even in the hospitals, the same strict attention to their laws of organized precedent was paid.

It almost seemed as if the German High Command had laid down, in some army regulation, the length of time a man must take to recover from such and such a wound without consideration for the constitution of the individual.

If, at the end of the specified time, a man had not recovered, he ought to have done so, and must therefore leave the hospital, whether he is well or not. Of course, this is not true to the letter, but it is more or less understood by the soldiers.

In my own case, I was removed from Dresden to Bischofswerda, a distance of some eighteen miles, long before the incision in my chest was healed, nor were they able to use their own common sense, and break away from the regular custom in the matter of dressing my wounds directly after the operation. According to custom, I was removed every morning from my own private ward to the dressing-theatre on a wheeled

stretcher. Every time I was lifted from the bed to the stretcher, I fainted away with the agony, not because the two men were not gentle, — they were, — but because my wound was in such a place that it was impossible to move me a fraction of an inch without opening up the wound. On returning from the dressing-station, the same performance had to be gone through before I was once more in my bed. For the first week I lost consciousness in this manner, and each time a double dose of morphine had to be administered. All day long and all through the night, I lived in continued dread of that dressing, working myself up to a fever before the appointed time each day.

When I timidly requested that I might be allowed to be dressed in my own bed, the thing was so much out of order that a special application had to be made to the military commander of the hospital. It was eventually granted, after which I had no more trouble with the dressings.

Very gradually I began to get strong, and as soon as I could sit up in a chair I was removed from the hospital and sent back to Bischofswerda, very glad to see all my old friends again. But my removal took place too soon, and the jolting of the carriage so upset me that I was again taken ill and suffered a very considerable relapse, being confined to bed in the hospital-room at Bischofswerda. Here I stayed for over a month,

during which time many little incidents of interest befell me. For instance, it appears that, contrary to all Boche rules and regulations, my parcels had been stopped and opened without any British officer being present, and, needless to say, two parcels containing a thousand marks each had been caught. Lieutenant Harbe paid me a visit in the hospital-room, sent everybody out, shut the windows, and started to bully me, although he knew I was very weak at the time. He also insulted me in every possible way. After he went I had a high temperature, and the next day reported him to the commandant.

Some days after this Mr. Jackson, the assistant of the American Ambassador, came. He paid me a visit in the hospital, and heard my tale of woe against Harbe, which he carried to the commandant, asking him to get rid of Harbe, since, during the whole period that he had been at Bischofswerda, he had deliberately tried and insulted officers to such an extent that it was difficult for them to hold themselves in check. He was therefore a very dangerous person to have in the camp, since, had any of them struck him, as he deserved, it would have been a most serious offence. However, nothing came of this, except that Harbe was forbidden to hold conversation with me unless in the presence of another officer.

After being a month in the hospital-room, I was re-

moved to a small room by myself on the first floor, where I rapidly began to regain strength, being able to walk across the room in the first few days of October.

I must not neglect to mention that we had a great poker club at Bischofswerda, through which an hour or two of regular uplifting excitement could be obtained. Whenever the natural demand for the same became overpowering, the game was a high one — it had to be to accomplish its purpose.

It was jolly good poker — I have rarely seen better — but it was played under difficulties which would seem insurmountable to any but a prisoner, who has always to make the best of everything. No gambling of any sort was allowed, and no German money was supposed to be in circulation in the camp. However, with a little wangling we managed to obtain one, two, five, and ten pfennig pieces, to be utilized as poker chips. Losses were paid to the acting secretary of the club, who settled all monetary matters for us by cheques sent home in monthly letters, and deposited in a certain bank in London.

Practically the only time it was possible to play was from eight to ten in the evening. Unfortunately a call-over was held every evening at nine o'clock, in the corridor, outside. This somewhat broke up the game, especially as one of the guards was sent to each room to herd the occupants out to the call-over. Before this

guard entered the room, the little poker table had to be hurriedly covered with a cloth, in order that he might not see the chips on the table, and thus discover that we had German money, or that a gambling game was in progress. After returning from the call-over, we played on until 9.30 or "lights out," and often managed to play on by the light of a hidden candle until 10.30 or 11.

Personally, I had very bad luck in these games, and lost steadily until the night before I left Bischofswerda, when I got it all back on a single hand. My luck was really quite extraordinary, as invariably I held the most tantalizing hands. The reader knows, perhaps, what it is to draw, continually, three "kinks" or three ladies or better, and then find some wretch who continually holds a straight.

In the great hand of which I speak, when I recovered all I had lost, I had the good fortune to be left in with such a first-rate hand as aces up full, against a pat royal flush! It was an exciting hand, and our room was full of other fellows from different cells who had flocked in on hearing of the big pool. That hand took a good ten minutes to play, but the pool was worth it, and the accompanying excitement, doubly so.

The day before I was removed from the hospital two British officers made a very fine attempt to escape, one obtaining civilian clothes through me, the other

having made a German private's uniform. The two of them passed out of the camp disguised as the tailor who used to visit us from the town and his guard in the German uniform. They got quite clear of the camp, when an officer, passing them on the road a few yards outside the camp, reported the soldier to the guard-room as going downtown without side arms, meaning the bayonet; and thus the two of them were caught. They were immediately court-martialled and put into cells.

On the 8th of October Harbe and three sentries stalked into my room, where I was still in bed, and informed me that I was going to be sent to a punishment camp, that all my things would now be packed in his presence, and that at four o'clock on the following morning I should leave for the new camp. I explained that I could hardly walk, and I certainly could not pack, so he started throwing my things into my two boxes. On this I sent for my great pal, who kindly came and packed everything for me, and also insisted on my taking all my food, which Harbe objected to. However, my friend persisted; and well, indeed, was it that he did so, since both myself and others would probably have starved had I not taken some food with me.

On the following day I got up from bed with a certain amount of effort. Proceeding to the ground floor,

where an officer and guard were waiting to escort us, I found that the officer who had attempted to escape disguised as the tailor was accompanying me to the new camp. We set off in a cab to the station, and after a very trying and tiring journey reached Ingolstadt, in Bavaria, at 9.30 the same night, so that we were travelling for seventeen hours. To me, who had not been out of bed for ten weeks, excepting for my journey from Dresden to Bischofswerda, and after my very serious operation, the fatigue of the journey can well be imagined. On the top of this the officer in charge, who had been quite civil and courteous on the way, left us at the station, and we were forced to walk from the station to one of the German soldiers' rest-camps, not being able to reach the prison at Ingolstadt that night. It was about six kilometres to this rest-camp, and the walk very nearly finished me. At the same time I had a heavy bag with me, which I should have had to carry also, had not my comrade who came with me done so. Since he was a major, it was not a very pleasant position for me; and had he not been such a splendid chap, I should have insisted on carrying it myself, an effort which would most certainly have been disastrous.

On arriving at the rest-camp, after having been forced to tramp in the centre of a muddy road, since prisoners were considered too despicable to be allowed

to walk on the footpath, we found a filthy, dirty, wooden building, filled with the dirtiest and most bedraggled-looking Boche soldiers I ever saw. At the end of this building was a small room, partitioned off, into which we were thrust and locked in for the night. I have seen some filthy places, but this certainly took the cake. Four beds and a table was all the furniture it could boast — the beds so close together as to be touching each other, the blankets and sheets black with dirt and grease. Fortunately our previous experience had taught us the value of Keating's Powder, some of which we had with us, and we liberally sprinkled the whole room, bedclothes and all. To our surprise, although it was so late, a large bowl of quite good bean soup was sent to us, for which we were extremely thankful.

After we had settled for the night, three Russian officers joined us, so that we now closely resembled the old comparison of sardines in a box. But although our surroundings were so uncomfortable, I was too done up to take much notice of anything, and was thankful to crawl into bed. The following morning at 9 o'clock, quite a decent breakfast was brought to us, for which, as usual, we had to pay. Still, we got it, which was the main thing, and shortly afterwards were marched to a small station about half a mile away, from where we took train to Ingolstadt Fort station. On arrival there

a further walk of about half a mile brought us to the fortress of Ingolstadt. As we passed over the moat into the fortress, a nasty cold feeling crept down my spine, and the words flashed across my mind, "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here."

CHAPTER VIII

THE HELL-HOLE OF INGOLSTADT

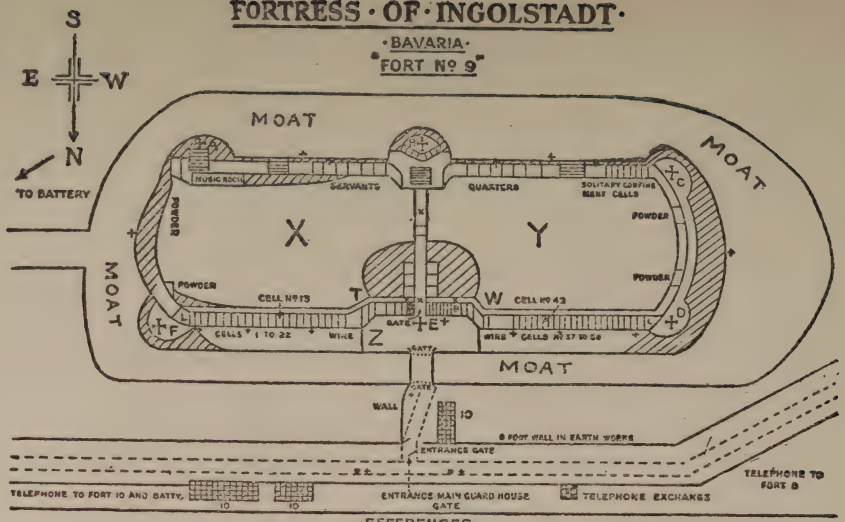
I WILL now refer, if I may, to one or two little notes which I made on the journey down from Saxony. In the first place, I never saw a single male porter at any station. The guards on trains were all women; and when the train ran slowly through any sort of farmed land, we saw groups of old men and little children doing some sort of work in the fields, although it was November, and one would think there was not very much to be done. I never saw a single male between the ages of fourteen and fifty-five either in the streets or towns, on the farms or elsewhere. It was as if Germany had been absolutely depopulated of males between those ages. What they have done with their unfits, goodness knows.

In order to pass into the fortress of Ingolstadt it was first necessary to enter by the guard-house gate composed of sheet iron, that bordered the road. From there forty yards brought you to a large iron grid, protecting the approach to the bridge passing over the moat. This grid, as well as the guard-house gate, was kept locked and guarded night and day. On being passed through the grid and over the moat, the main entrance to the fortress was approached over a paved causeway. The

FORTRESS · OF · INGOLSTADT ·

· BAVARIA ·

"FORT Nº 9"



· REFERENCES ·

✝ SENTRIES ON BATTLEMENTS ABOVE US A–F

✝ SENTRIES INSIDE THE FORT,

L. LATRINES

X.Y.Z. EXCERCISE GROUND

✝ SENTRIES OUTSIDE ON LEVEL WITH MOAT

B. BATH

COMMANDANT'S BUREAU

EARTHWORKS

GUN EMPLACEMENTS

EXTERIOR GUARD HOUSE

INTERIOR GUARD HOUSE

gate consisted of a pair of massive steel doors, folding in the middle, and built into the stonework of the lower works. These stoneworks were protected from artillery fire by large earthworks, surmounting to a great height above them, set out in battlements and caponiers, with artillery platforms. On entering the fortress we found ourselves in one of the darkest, dampest, and most forbidding-looking places I was ever in, the damp and darkness being caused by the earthworks overhead, which rose to a height of thirty-five feet from the roof of the stoneworks. The whole interior was afterwards discovered to be filthy in the extreme. On page 115 is a plan of the fortress looking down through the earthworks.

On entering these gloomy portals, we were immediately conducted to the commandant's quarters, which were situated next to the entrance. Here we were searched, but nothing of consequence was discovered. My first impression of the commandant was a good one. It was not long before I discovered it to be erroneous, as will be seen hereafter.

After our examination we were led to our cell, which was to be my home for seven months. It did not look inviting. A general description of the fortress is necessary, in order that the reader may understand subsequent events. With the help of the plan this should not be very difficult.

The living-rooms assigned to the prisoners were a

series of tunnel-shaped cells, running along the north and south fronts of the fortress. These were connected by a long stone corridor, and divided into two wings by the main entrance, as shown on the plan. Each cell was connected to its neighbor by a small archway, which had been partitioned off in order to make separate compartments. These partitions were in some cases made of wood, in others they had been bricked up. The cells were twenty-six feet long by fifteen feet broad, and contained six officers each. Thus, with six beds, a dining-table, a cooking-stove (supplied by ourselves), and a space set apart to act as a kitchen and scullery, there was not very much room. The roof being arched like a tunnel, it was not possible to get the full benefit of the floor-space, since one could not stand upright if near the walls. These walls were made of granite, badly whitewashed, and exuding moisture. During any damp weather, the festoons of cobwebs which helped to adorn the ceiling glistened like a long grotto. On one side of the cells a small drain, excavated out of the wall, acted as a passage for the waters above. This drain opened out into the cell by a small trap-door, through which one could both hear and see the continual drip, drip of water, which in rainy weather formed itself into a small stream, occasionally flooding over into the cell. At all times a large ring of damp covered the floor in its proximity.

As before explained, the cells were approached by a long stone corridor running parallel with them, lighted by skylights at every forty or fifty yards, which pierced upwards through the earthworks above them. These, however, admitted very little light, except when the sun was shining. One was always in danger of bumping up against somebody walking in the opposite direction; in fact, a good many hard knocks were received in this way. The latrines were situated at the bottom of each of these corridors. This is not a subject which one cares to enlarge upon, but in this history it is necessary, in order to form a correct idea of the conditions under which we lived. These latrines consisted of a mere hole in the stone floor, with no form of drainage. Consequently the atmosphere in the corridor became at times almost unbearable, since the corridor acted as a sort of flue to the latrines, with which it was directly connected, the final result of this being that, when officers passed in and out of these rooms, a certain amount of the disgusting odor penetrated into the cells. Thus we had to sleep, feed, and live in one of these cells, attacked from inside by insanitary conditions, living in a dirty, damp, badly lighted stone cell, menaced from the outside by mosquitoes and miasma rising off the waters of the moat, on to which the cells looked through very heavily barred windows. The floors were made of asphalt, which struck cold into

one's very marrow, so that the majority of us were always stiff with rheumatism.

At first we were allowed to take exercise in the hollows marked *X* and *Y* in the plan, also to walk round the ramparts of the protecting earthworks. But this was very soon stopped, owing to an attempt to escape over the moat; and, finally, the only exercise-ground allowed us was that marked *Z* on the plan, immediately beneath the drawbridge and main entrance, a space a little larger than a tennis court for some three hundred of us to exercise in. To the reader it must seem almost incredible that even a Hun would incarcerate a prisoner of war in a hell-hole such as this, immediately after having undergone a very serious operation; but so it was.

Having given a rough sketch of the prisoners' accommodation in the fortress, I now propose to record the events of an ordinary average day. *Appell*, or roll-call, was at 7.30 in the morning, and held in the cells. The intimation of the *Appell* was heralded by an enormous alarm-bell fitted in each wing. After this bell had sounded no officer was allowed to leave his cell under any circumstances. The Boche N.C.O. and one sentry visited the cells in turn, counting six officers in each cell. The N.C.O. entered the cells from the corridor in order to make this count, the sentry remaining outside in order to prevent an officer who had been already

counted from proceeding down the corridor to a cell which had not been counted, and thus being counted again. The necessity for this was, in the event of an officer escaping another being counted in twice would allow the escaper time to get away from the camp, should he have been fortunate enough to get clear.

After the *Appell* breakfast was served to us by the French orderly allotted to our cell. The reader must not imagine we had the use of the orderly all day; he had numerous other duties to perform for the Boche. He usually made our beds and emptied the slops (not always), and occasionally did the washing up after meals. He also fetched our fresh water in a bucket. The breakfast consisted of a large cupful of hot coffee, already mixed with milk. As a matter of fact it was made of ground acorns and a small percentage of chicory, and was quite undrinkable. This, with three ounces of black bread, which chiefly consisted of potato peelings, bran, and sawdust, was all we had for breakfast. At the midday meal we received five potatoes for six officers, or a swede weighing about one and a half pounds, or seventeen sticks of tinned asparagus. Each cell had its ration *en bloc*, so that whatever food came was divided up amongst the six people in each cell. For supper a breakfast-cupful of soup, made of ground white beans (sometimes edible, but not often), was provided.

The above constituted the regular rations. Besides these we received other rations: forty-five grammes of meat each per week, including bone, and occasionally some stinking fish, so bad that it could not be kept in the cell for more than a minute or two. The other rations were fifteen lumps of sugar each per month; one pound of tea (cut from the stem) per six officers, usually twice during the month; and, lastly, a sherry-glassful of rum every six weeks for the six of us, and a soup-plateful of tinned fruit. All the food which was not provided as a daily ration was only given by the Boches in order that they might be able to bring out a list showing how well they fed their prisoners. This last was principally for the edification of the American Ambassador. The following really looks quite well: Rum, Sugar, Tea, Meat, Bread, Soup, Vegetables, Potatoes, Fruit, Fish.

But all that glitters, etc. — as will be seen by my description of how this food was made and distributed. Soon after the morning *Appell* we would hurry to the bath, or so-called bath. Only a drawing by Heath Robinson could possibly do justice to it. No words could describe the extraordinarily primitive arrangements. A cement cauldron, on the top of which rested a number of large basins, containing the water to be heated. One third of a sack of coal was allowed three days a week, in order to heat the water in these basins,

which must suffice for the ablutions of three hundred officers. The water, when hot, was ladled out with a magnified soup-tureen by hand, and thrown into a bath. From there the water was pumped up by hand to a series of beer-casks, resting on a wooden frame and partitioned off so as to have one cask over each compartment. The bather then proceeded to let loose the water in the barrels by operating a rough valve, when the water, which was nearly cold, owing to the many vicissitudes to which it had been subjected, poured out in a slow trickle upon the bather. Nevertheless, there was a terrific scramble for the bath daily. One could have overlooked the fact of this Stone Age arrangement had the place been kept clean, but the filth of it was indescribable. Streams of soapy water running over the mud floor had rendered it something akin to axle grease. Great care had to be taken in order not to slip; for to slip, which one often did, meant being covered in filth, which no amount of washing in cold water would remove.

After having completed the morning's ablution under these delightful conditions, one or other of the officers in each cell would be told off to cook the breakfast and lay the table. This was usually taken in turn, and a very good breakfast we had too — that is, when our parcels were arriving from home regularly. No knives, forks, spoons, or plates were supplied to us,

also no utensils for cooking. We were forced to buy our own stove. The coal which was supplied to us every second day would be equal to two small scuttlefuls. This had to do for warming the cell and for cooking all the necessary food. There were times when this coal allowance diminished considerably below the amount, especially during the coldest period. At one time we could only afford to have the fire lit after 12 noon. This was in January, when the thermometer stood at thirty-two degrees Centigrade below freezing-point. Let the reader imagine what that means in a stone cell, situated thirty-five feet beneath the earth. Certainly we did not suffer from damp, since everything was ice. Our drainage-vent was solid ice about a foot thick.

To continue with recording the events of our average day at Ingolstadt. Soon after having had breakfast one or the other of us, in turn, would proceed to wash up the dirty breakfast things, no easy or pleasant job to wash greasy pots and pans with ice-cold water. In fact it is quite impossible to get them clean without warm water, as any housewife knows. Whilst the washing-up was going on, one of the other members of the cell would busy himself trying to give the place a general clean-up, sweeping the floor, making beds, etc.

The next item on our day's list was another *Appell*, or call-over, held at 11.30 A.M. outside in the paved

courtyard in front of the main entrance to the fortress, which we used as an exercise-ground.

This *Appell* always held an element of excitement for us, as we were never quite sure if the commandant would so far lose his head as to order the guard to shoot or not. It came very near it several times. I am sure that most of us suffered in our self-esteem during those *Appells*, seeing one's self and one's companions herded together like so many sheep in a pen, pushed, jostled, and manhandled by the dirty Bavarian soldiers, yelled at and insulted, and kept standing for hours in the cold because Boche N.C.O.'s could not count us properly. Sometimes the feeling of the prisoners would reach boiling pitch, especially when the commandant issued orders or chose to deliver a "strafing" speech in German or French. We could only relieve our feelings by the whole batch of us shouting, "We don't understand! Give us an interpreter!" for it is a rule in Germany that every camp should have its interpreters. There were none at Ingolstadt; in fact there was really nothing at Ingolstadt except bad treatment.

After the *Appell*, we would retire to our cells, one of us starting to prepare our midday meal; the rest taking their shifts at whatever escaping project happened to be on hand at the moment, for we were never without work of this sort. I can safely make the statement that from the time I went to Ingolstadt until I left, there

was never a moment, night or day, that the prisoners were not working their fingers to the bone in order to effect some means of escape. Plans of varying degrees of ingenuity were always in preparation, tunnelling being the chief form of attempt. Tunnelling through rock without the necessary tools when every pick may be heard by a sentry, and thus put an end to the whole work, — the labor, perhaps, of many weary months, — is terribly hard and nerve-racking work.

After a light lunch, according to the state of our larders, the afternoons were usually spent in further work appertaining to escape, such as copying maps of the different frontiers, preparing clothes so as to carry as much food, sewn into our coats and trousers, as possible. Generally work of this sort ceased towards four o'clock, owing to the want of light. One miserable oil lamp, which had to last us five days before being refilled, was all that was allowed to light up our darksome cell. Sometimes welcome packages from home would bring us a few candles, and then we would be able to read a book for a little while, or play a game of bridge in comfort, one candle beside each player. The evening was spent in preparing the principal meal for the day, and afterwards, washing up. Then the work of escape would go on, or a small game of bridge, if a four could be raised. About 9.30 P.M. we usually turned into bed, not that we wanted to go to bed at

that hour, but that we could not spare the light to sit up any longer. Often enough there was no oil left after the second day, in which case we would all crowd into the cell of some other fellows who had candles or other lights. Those lightless evenings were terribly trying to the nerves. They made us short-tempered and crabby even with our best friends, for every prisoner lives within himself more or less. It was not in our code to confide the deep despair and bitter reflections of the soul to others, no matter how great the friendship might be. Sometimes, however, the thought that that very day you had stolen the commandant's coal, torn down and burned some wood in the fortress, or destroyed a bed, would buck one up considerably, because we felt that whatever we had taken from the Germans we had given to the Allied Cause.

It has been explained that in November we were allowed to exercise on the ramparts, which formed a very pleasant walk round. From this height a good view could be obtained of the surrounding country. There were no notices up explaining exactly which part of the ramparts we were allowed to frequent. We therefore went all over them without hindrance. There were six sentries posted on the caponiers overlooking the moat; therefore there was no earthly reason why we should be debarred from walking or sitting anywhere on the ramparts, since every part was overlooked by

sentries. Apart from this, in order to descend from the ramparts to the level of the moat, one would be compelled to go down a very steep bank of some fifty feet. The escaper would then find himself shooting into the arms of the outer ring of sentries stationed inside and on a level with the moat, with sentries on both sides of it.

Nevertheless, after we had been allowed to roam at will over the ramparts, one day the sentry on the main caponier suddenly and without warning opened fire on two Russian officers lying near the breastworks beneath him, who were taking advantage of a short spell of sunshine. The sentry fired at them for no apparent reason. Fortunately for the Russians they were not hit, though it was only a matter of inches, as the sentry was not more than sixty paces from them. This caused, of course, a fearful commotion in the camp. The sentry very nearly got mobbed by the prisoners. In fact, I thought it was coming, and did my best to calm them, since the prisoners must be the losers in the end, fists being of very little use against rifles, especially inside a fortress. Within a minute or two the interior of the fortress was flooded with guards from the guard-room, and the prisoners were herded to their cells and locked in.

The commandant was in a great state of agitation, knowing very well that it would not take much to

make the smouldering embers of the prisoners' overcharged feelings burst into flames. The worm will turn, even if it has no means of defence, and our treatment was rapidly nearing the limit of petty persecution. After this the use of the ramparts and interior exercise-grounds was debarred to us, so that we only had the small paved area at the entrance to the fortress to exercise in.

At one time in November, before the interior exercise-grounds were closed to us, the inmates of my cell had a little tunnelling scheme on hand. We discovered that in the arched roof of the so-called "music-room" cell, there was an old shaft connecting the cell to the gun platform of the caponier above, probably used for hoisting ball ammunition in the old days and later turned into a skylight. The skylight had been bricked in from above, but not down its whole length. Consequently about ten feet of shaft still remained open in the roof of the cell beneath. To make use of this unbricked portion to tunnel upwards to the caponier was our plan; we should, of course, still be inside the fortress. Provided we were successful in piercing through to the caponier and had been able to fake the call-over the night we made the attempt, the only obstacles would be the drop over the sloping sides of the earthworks to the moat, and swimming the moat, under fire from the sentries on the caponier and the sentries

on a level with the moat! However, given a dark night, and a good chance of being missed by men whose fingers were cold with long sentry duty, we would make for the open country, and then, who knew? — somebody might find fortune.

I mentioned, above, "faking call-over." Whenever it was absolutely necessary to the plans of a would-be escaper, we used to fake the call-over, in order to give him time to get away. Unless the plan demanded it, this fake was not undertaken, as the vital necessity of being able to do it was too serious to be risked for a trivial or unlikely attempt.

I have described how the cells were connected by a stone archway, which had been partitioned either by wood or stone. Wherever there was a wooden partition, it was possible to do the trick, provided it was done with coolness and rapidity and sure movement. At call-over, the Boche sergeant visited each cell in turn and counted his full complement of prisoners in each cell. He then passed on to the next cell, and so on, down the corridor. It was necessary, therefore, for the prisoners to be counted and found correct in the first cell visited. Then, as the sergeant turned and went out, one of us slipped through a sliding door, cunningly devised in the wooden partition, got into another coat and hat, and seated himself with his back to a lighted candle, in this way taking the place of the missing man. All

this had to be done before the sergeant could walk five paces in the corridor, and enter the second cell. The count would be taken, and, of course, would be correct.

The danger came in the lightning speed of slipping through the prepared opening, closing it, getting into a coat and hat similar to that worn by the absent man, and getting seated in such a manner that the dim light would not fall on one's face. Two seconds was the limit of time. The feat was only possible with the coöperation of every one in the second cell; one to open and close the sliding door; one standing ready with coat and hat; a third, standing in front of his own cell door, to prevent the sergeant from being able to see every movement at the moment of entering. One false move or loss of coolness, and the trick was up.

But to get back to our escaping scheme. The job required three men on each shift, one to excavate, one to watch from inside the cell, and one to signal to him from the outside of the approach of danger, in the form of either the sentry on sentry duty, or on the caponier above, or the fortress detective. The signal from the man outside was usually conveyed by his blowing his nose with a white handkerchief. The watcher inside then gave the signal to the excavator, by a low whistle. If the sentry above were either approaching or directly over the shaft, he would be able to hear the least noise

of picking, so that work had to be suspended for a minute or two during each of his beats.

Our first difficulty was to fasten two iron staples in the roof at the entrance of the shaft, in order that a plank might be placed across them to allow the excavator something upon which to stand. The second difficulty was to obtain sufficiently adequate tools to pick with. Two staples and some three or four chisels were improvised out of a number of iron stanchions, wrenched out of different walls in the fortress, and heated to white heat in the fire before they could be fashioned to our purpose.

When the shift went to work, the excavator had first to be hoisted to his perch and a blanket spread beneath to catch every grain of telltale mortar and brick that would inevitably shower down. He then picked away, until he got the signal to stop, and began again when the danger had passed. Sometimes he was obliged to stop for a longer period, when his three or four picks had become all bent and useless, when they must go back to the cell and precious fire, in order to be re-tempered and straightened.

On one occasion, the camp detective came in too quickly for the excavator to get down, or for the watcher inside to remove the sheet. However, they kept their heads. With a fraction of a second to spare, the sheet was handed to the man above, who remained

motionless while the detective searched about beneath him. In fact, he actually looked up the shaft, but it was too dark to be able to see up its whole length without going up with a candle. Our hearts were beating so that we felt suffocated, but at last, the detective turned away. He had seen nothing, and had evidently decided that nobody would attempt such an apparently impossible task as to burrow through a solid wall.

However, we worked successfully on the shaft for about a month — a month of weary toil — when one day our hopes were bitterly dashed to the ground. A scatter-brained young French officer hid in the shaft all one night, without arranging to have his call-over faked. And so the whole game was up. Neither am I unfair in calling the young man "scatter-brained," for he was the laugh of the French as well as ourselves. We called him "Tartarin."

Towards the end of November the weather became extremely cold, and in consequence our conditions became unbearable, owing to the lack of sufficient coal for heating purposes. This led to another little attention from the Boches similar to that described above. A batch of prisoners were transferred from the fort to some other camp, and this left vacant one of the cells. This was too good an opportunity to miss, since possibly a portion of coal might be left by the officers just gone. One of the British officers therefore paid a visit

to the empty cell. There was nothing to hinder him from doing so, for he merely had to proceed down the corridor from his own cell till he reached the other one. Immediately, however, he put his head in at the door the sentry outside shot at him through the grated window. Fortunately he missed him, but that was not the fault of the sentry. Of course we complained at such disgraceful treatment, and the commandant said he would severely rate the sentry, but nothing ever came of it in the way of redress.

CHAPTER IX

A "BLOND BEAST" COMMANDANT

To further illustrate the general scheme of treatment, I will recount the form of medical attention meted out to us. A doctor from the town of Ingolstadt visited us on Mondays and Fridays. He was quite a good fellow, though I never saw him sober, and I went to him dozens of times. Consequently, from a medical point of view, he was quite useless. As a permanent assistant he had a French Alsatian Tommy, whose duty it was to administer the doses and attend cases generally, such as massage for rheumatism, from which we all suffered, and bandaging troublesome old wounds. This orderly had had no training, and as a matter of fact was taught to rub and bandage by us. He was not able to procure medicines, and had no authority to do so.

On one occasion a Russian officer tried to commit suicide towards midnight. This took place in the right wing of the cells, which after 9 P.M. was shut off from the administrative officer in the centre by doors marked *W* and *T* in sketch; and although the officer's comrades nearly battered down the door in order to get some sort of medical help from the commandant, it was refused; consequently the poor wretch had to lie

and bleed till morning, when he was removed to hospital in the town, too late to help him, I fear; but of course we never were allowed to know the result. At another time an officer in my wing (the left) was taken with violent fever and fearful pain in breathing, which turned out to be double pneumonia. We tried in vain to get some medical help, but we were only laughed at from the other side of the iron-studded door, and told that the swine officer must take his chance.

There was no sick-room of any sort. This could have been excused had we been in or near a town, but since we were situated five miles from the outskirts of the town it became inexcusable, especially as, owing to the unhealthy state of the camp, everybody was more or less unwell at some period or other. A sort of ague fever attacked nearly every one, and we found it very difficult to keep clear of bad colds and throats. Towards the end of December the cold became so intense that it was impossible to keep warm. The only method of keeping the circulation up was by skipping. Our coal allowance, which had been entirely inadequate before, was cut down. It was now only possible to utilize it for cooking purposes. Some means had to be found in order to add to our fuel, and this we discovered. I refer to the wood partitions connecting those cells which were not occupied, also some wooden partitions separating the holes used as latrines, and the commandant's pri-

vate lavatory. Another man, since escaped from Germany, and I tore down these partitions and burnt them in our cooking-stoves to create what warmth we could. Of course it was not long before the Boches found it out, and, since they could not discover the actual offenders, the whole of the officers in the fortress were charged so much for repairs, which repairs never took place unfortunately, as we should then have had a fresh supply of wood, although we burnt everything we could possibly lay our hands on. Wood burns at such a fearful rate that this only kept us going for a few weeks.

We had, however, another fuel supply which, though it yielded only very small quantities, was more regular, with the added advantage that a certain amount of excitement was entailed in obtaining the fuel. We were not only cold from without, but from within, since we were very short of food, and nearly a month had passed since our last parcels of food had arrived from home. My particular all was down to two small boxes of sardines a day for the six of us — consequently we had been forced to eat the glutinous paste supplied by the Boches as a soup ration; it had no nourishment, but it filled the stomach.

There were three places in the fortress where coal was fairly plentiful — the Boche guard-room, the bath-room on Thursdays, when the German guard took

their weekly wash, and the commandant's private bureau — especially the last two.

With luck we usually managed to make the Boches' bath-day on Thursday supply us with enough coal to give us a couple of hours' fire on Friday and Saturday, the commandant being made to supply us for the rest of the week.

There was not much excitement in getting it from the bathroom — it was too easy. One had merely to take one's tin wash-basin to the bath, fill it on the way out (without the bath orderly seeing, of course), cover the basin with one's towel, and proceed to one's cell.

But to filch it out of the commandant's own coal box, right under his nose, with his five trusted *Feldwebel* in the room at the same time — ah! that was a little job worthy of the daring.

The commandant's bureau is marked on the plan (page 115), and it will be noticed that a sentry was stationed outside his door. Inside the room, facing the door, sat the commandant at his desk, and against the wall to his right two more desks were occupied by his two *Feldwebel*. Opposite them was the stove and large open box, which acted as coal box; next to that again, a large cupboard which held the confiscated articles of different unsuccessful escapers. The plan of procedure was this: Five or six of us paid a visit to the commandant — the more the better — and made some reason-

able complaint, of which, alas, we had only too many. Two or three then lined up in front of the *Feldwebels'* desks, and distracted their attention. The others argued with the commandant, and the last man in, apparently standing behind, doing nothing, in reality produced from under his large mackintosh a small leather handbag which he quietly placed beside the coal box. During the altercation which ensued, he stealthily bent down and placed the largest piece of coal from the box into the bag, and so on, until he had filled the bag and it disappeared onto a little hook inside his coat which was prepared to receive it.

He then waited patiently for whatever might happen next. His pals, having seen that all was ready, were now willing to give in to the commandant, who, by this time, was usually foaming at the mouth. Before long the sentry was sent for, and we were all pushed off to our cell. And then how we laughed as the victorious little bag of warmth was produced.

Sometimes, indeed, we failed to procure any coal. But when we were successful, the Boches never discovered how or where it went to, the sheer audacity of the thing making it often possible.

It was in January that the Swiss Commission paid another visit; but although numerous cases were up in front of them, only one French officer was accepted, and he was eventually sent back from Constance. The

commission put me on the list, but refused to make mine a special case, since they had no record of the history of my wound, so the hope of going a train journey at the expense of the Boches towards the Swiss frontier came to an end.

The British officers in general passed a good many weary hours away in playing bridge, and owing to the limitations of light during the long dark winter evenings we constantly played in the afternoons. At one of these afternoon sessions we were surprised in our usual game in a cell shared by four British officers and two Frenchmen. One of the French officers was leaving for another camp, thus vacating one of the wooden beds. The Boches having learned by bitter experience that a vacant bed would be turned into firewood, within half an hour of its being vacated paid a visit to this cell in order to remove the bed to a safer place. This occurred during our game of bridge. Now, in order to remove the bed from the cell, it was necessary to take it to pieces, owing to the door of the cell not being wide enough to admit of its being taken out whole.

While dismembering the bed the Boche carpenter in charge of the work missed some of his stock-in-trade, a large pair of iron pincers which he had inadvertently laid on the floor beside him, whilst working on the bed. The sight of this rare and useful article in such close proximity awoke the attention of our bridge-

four to the possibilities of adding so precious a tool to our escaping outfit. Accordingly a little expert manœuvring on the part of one of our number brought the tool into our possession without raising the suspicion of the carpenter.

One of the other members of our four now left the cell with the pincers in his pocket, walked a few yards down the passage, and gave them to some friend in another cell. He then returned to us in order to continue the game of bridge, knowing full well that by that time the pincers had been transferred to the other wing of the fortress. Immediately afterwards, the carpenter discovered his loss and reported the matter to the bureau. This led, of course, to an immediate examination of our cell by the commandant in person. The commandant stormed in and first accused us all in turn with having the pincers. We could all truthfully reply that we had not got the pincers, and further, that we did not know where they were (which was also perfectly true). Upon this statement, a search was made and also an examination of our persons, but, of course, without result. During this examination the door of the cell opened, and a French officer of the name of Borgeau entered. On seeing the commandant he commenced to apologize, at which the former flew at him, calling him a pig of a Frenchman and various other insulting names. Borgeau very wisely withdrew to his

own cell, situated farther down the passage; but he kept the door of his cell open, in order to intercept the commandant on his way back to his bureau and demand an explanation for this unnecessary insult. This he did, but before Borgeau had time to say anything the commandant went for him, and struck him on the face and chest with his clenched fist. At the same time his two sentries with their lowered bayonets pressed into the cell along with the *Feldwebel* (sergeant-major). The commandant was like a wild beast, and in one of his furious attacks on the defenceless Borgeau he overswung and knocked his own *Feldwebel* off his feet. This caused a roar of laughter from the other occupants of the cell and increased the general pandemonium. Fortunately Borgeau kept his head in this very difficult situation, and resisted the inclination to strike back. Had he done so, he would have been shot for a certainty.

Later on in the day three British officers were called to the commandant's bureau to sign certain necessary papers, but when they found that they had to deal with the commandant in person they refused to speak to him, and told him in French that they would transact their business with the *Feldwebel*, since they did not consider him (the commandant) either a gentleman or an officer responsible for his actions after the affair of that morning in striking a defenceless prisoner without

the slightest provocation whatever. As a result of this they were immediately confined to solitary cells, kept for the purpose, in the interior of the fortress. Two officers escaped from these cells in about two hours, and returned to their own cells. On this being discovered they were removed to the town civilian jail.

As will be seen, in return for the vile treatment dealt out to us by the Boches, *we did not give them very much peace whenever the opportunity arose to do otherwise, consequently our guard was doubled at the fortress, which pleased us very much, since we felt that we were keeping a number of men away from the front, and thus still helping to do our little share towards the war.* Of course it increased the difficulties of escape a little, but not to any appreciable extent. It was almost impossible to get away with or without a whole skin. This being the case, a few more guards more or less did not make very much difference.

Hauptmann Hirsch and his *Feldwebel* were, perhaps, the worst commandant and *Unteroffiziers* it was my lot to strike during my two and a half years' imprisonment. His name should most certainly be on the reprisal list of the Allies. The German High Command were certainly not responsible for his ungovernable tempers and petty forms of persecution. To him, alone, can be attributed the uncalled-for shooting at the prisoners inside the fortress; the lack of coal or wood dur-

ing the severest winter (1916–17) and the lack of exercise grounds when he had them at his disposal; the unspeakable filth conditions existing in the interior of the fortress; the power which he placed in the hands of his N.C.O.'s to insult and bully the officer prisoners at every turn; the lack of drinking-water which by the commandant's orders might only be drawn in a pail once a day; the unsanitary condition of the holes in the ground used as latrines, and the disgraceful lack of medical attention.

About this time a certain amount of interest was caused by the arrival at the fortress of a new battery of anti-aircraft guns which were installed with a platoon of infantrymen in the southeast battery of the fortress. A good deal of comment arose as to just what they were for, and it was some time before the problem was solved. We tried to flatter ourselves that the new guns were to help keep us in, but eventually we found that they were to protect, against invasion from the air, the Ingolstadt powder and ammunition factory which was situated about three quarters of a mile to the south of the fortress and one of the biggest factories of its kind in Bavaria.

It is, of course, strictly against the findings of the Hague Convention that a prison camp may be used as a shield for belligerent artillery. That is exactly what we were used for, since the Boches were fully aware

that our airmen would not drop bombs on their batteries if it meant wiping out their own fellow countrymen in prison.

Undoubtedly Ingolstadt was by far the worst camp I was in, and yet it was in one way the best, because of the wonderful *esprit de corps* which existed among the prisoners. Every one helped his fellow prisoners. If a compass or a map was wanted and it was possible in any way to obtain such a thing, you were shown the way to go about it, or perhaps it was obtained for you, regardless of risk.

There were two small steel hacksaw blades, about five inches long, which belonged to two old hands of Frenchmen in the fortress — precious jewels, these saws; more precious than a ton of diamonds, for if they wore out, they could never be replaced. And yet they were always at one's disposal, so long as one was considered a responsible person and not scatter-brained.

When the time came for me to need a compass, I was given a tip as to how to procure one, by a fellow who had been in the fortress over a year, and knew all those who had come and gone in that time. It appears that one day a prisoner obtained permission from the commandant to visit an oculist's shop in the town in order to have his glasses readjusted. When he visited the shop, he discovered some compasses under the glass counter, and succeeded in secretly buying one. Over-

joyed, he returned to the camp with his priceless find. Some time later, he escaped and was eventually caught, when the compass was found on his person, with the name of the shop from whence it came engraved on it. In consequence, the shop was heavily fined, and shut up, as a lesson to others.

My friend at the fortress suggested that there was another oculist's shop in the town, and that since it was about a year since the last affair, I might at least have a try at it. He laughed and looked at me closely, assuming an air of extreme solicitude.

"Your eyes do look rather bloodshot," he said sympathetically. Then he added, "There is a young man in the shop and his two sisters — the sisters are rather charming."

"That's all right," I replied, "but how am I to get into the town?"

"Go and see the commandant," he suggested, "and tell him that you are nearly blind for want of light, and that you intend reporting the same to the American representatives when they come next time, and that you must be fitted to spectacles right away. Suggest going to Munich — that will put the old fox off the scent."

"Right-o, old thing," I replied. "I'll have a shot at it. I'll try right away," and started off.

With a mischievous grin he called me back.

"If you're successful, you might bring me one, you know."

"It's as good as yours," I promised, and he laughed and told me I was optimistic. I told him that naturally I was optimistic, else I should n't be alive at that minute, and I marched off in search of the commandant.

He told me that the doctor must look at my eyes on Monday, when he made his calls, so I waited for Monday with impatience. When he arrived, he was, as usual, quite drunk, which made my permission all the easier to get. Another officer, who really was nearly blind, and I, were marched to the military hospital in the town of Ingolstadt where we were examined. The doctor there was suspicious of me, and tried to catch me, but I simply would n't be caught, and finally he gave me an order for a pair of lenses. The other officer came through all right, naturally, and we were marched to the oculist's shop accompanied by two guards. Here we handed in our prescriptions, and underneath the glass of the counter lay four beautiful brand-new compasses. I pointed them out to the young man in the shop and asked to have a look at them, speaking in French.

He shook his head. Did I not speak German?

I told him only a few words and asked him if there was no one in the shop who could speak French.

"Oh, yes, my sister," he said, and hurried away.

Presently a little woman came out. She was, I supposed, one of the charming beauties my French friend had so eloquently described. Ah, you dear Frenchmen, — where a lady is concerned, what optimists you are!

The little lady was very agreeable, but on my broaching the subject of compasses, she turned to the guard who was in the shop and said:

"It is 'verboten,' is that not so, Soldaten?"

"Ya, ya," he replied, and explained that he was there to see that the English officers did not buy forbidden articles. So I said, carelessly:

"Oh, never mind. I don't want it," and added, very low, in French: "But I would have paid fifty marks apiece if I could have gotten them."

At that, she looked up and winked, as she turned her back to us.

"How long will it be before our glasses are fixed?" I asked.

"Oh, about an hour," she said. "My brother has to grind the lenses to fit the frames. He's in there," and she nodded to the little back parlor. "That's his workshop. He's got an electric motor."

"Really," I said, with much interest. "I'm an engineer. I should love to see it. Also I'm very thirsty. Could we procure a couple of bottles of wine and drink them in — our little parlor while we wait?"

She turned to the guard, who said "No"; that it was

"verboten." I saw signs of thawing, however, and I said:

"Now, look here, my good man, I'm tired and cold with the walk, and I must get a drink. Come now — nobody will know, and you'll get as much as the rest."

Finally he weakened, and shortly afterwards we were all seated in the parlor with the brother and another fair (?) sister. The young man sent out for a couple of bottles of wine, and when we had opened them we all drank to the speedy end of the war, the guard having a generous share of the wine.

The time for action had now come. I signalled one of the sisters that I must have four compasses. She retired into the shop and slipped them into her pocket and returned. The other officer stood between me and the brother who was working at his machine, and filling up a fresh bumper, I stood facing the guard, with my other hand behind my back, holding out the tempting German money. And while the guard and I were draining our glasses, the four compasses found their way into my pocket, and the money into the hands of the fair lady.

The spectacles were fitted and finished, and we returned to the fortress, reaching there just before dark. Thus, four compasses came to cheer the souls of four men at Ingolstadt. I went to the officer who gave me

the tip, and presented him with one. He took it and laughed.

"Eh, bien, mon ami," he said. "You're more than an optimist."

"Well, you're not," I retorted. "The lady had a face like a tomato."

During the month of December I became very friendly with a French officer, and the two of us decided to carry out a plan of escape which we had hit upon. We were to cut through the thick iron bars of the cell window, slip past the sentry, pass over the frozen moat and dash away; it sounds comparatively easy, but it proved pretty difficult.

First, we had to borrow one of the precious hack-saws, and then we had to make a dummy bar, to put in place of the severed one, when we should have succeeded in cutting through it. The dummy bar had to be fashioned of a bed slat, brought to the right color by soaking and painting with some gray chalk which we procured.

Cutting the bar was a heart-breaking task, as the longest time we could safely saw continuously was about five seconds, owing to the fact that the sentry passed up and down on a level with the window, not more than four feet away. One man worked on the saw, while another watched the sentry with the aid of a tiny mirror which was stuck outside the window on

the end of a thin writing pen. When the sentry neared the cell on his return beat, the worker on the saw must have his saw out, and have jumped down from the window before the sentry came opposite the window. It took us five days and nights to get the bar cut — a job which would have taken about half an hour's steady work — and our hands were in bad condition when it was completed. However, the bar looked as solid as before, and lard and plaster lime were cunningly filled in the cuts so that no one could tell it had been severed.

The next step was to arrange with one of the French orderlies, who worked on the carbide lamps round the fortress, and who was in the game, to fill the lamps with oil in the bottom, so that at a given hour they would all splutter out. This he did, and succeeded in passing them under the *Feldwebel's* own eyes.

At 8.30 I was to cross over from my wing of the fortress to cell 22, where the severed bar was, and an officer from that cell would take my place for call-over in my cell. All was in readiness — food, warm clothes for the journey, maps, compasses, etc.

I was sitting on my bed, waiting for the time to leave my cell, and wondering whether, if the sentry fired, he would hit me or not, for we would be obliged to pass within five yards of him. However, if the lamps acted well, the chances were good enough. We did n't hope to get more than thirty seconds start, but given a dark

night, and one hundred yards to the good, we might make it. Suddenly, my heart jumped. The big alarm bell clanged out its warning.

"What the devil is that for?" I thought. "A call-over, at this time?"

Such was the case, however, and the Boche arrived, counted the prisoners and found everything correct, and returned to the commandant. But they locked and guarded the corridor connecting the two wings, and there was no chance that night.

"Well," I thought, "I must grin and bear it, and hope for better luck to-morrow night."

That night, at 11.30, every lamp in the fortress suddenly flickered out. The guard were in a frenzy, calling for light. And there I sat in my cell, tormented by the thoughts of the chance I had missed; the bar was severed, the fortress in total darkness, and there was I, on the wrong side of the prison. Would my friend B—— try it alone? I hoped so. The night was as black as pitch and everything in our favor. It was simply sheer rotten bad luck.

In the morning we found that the reason for the early call-over and lock-up was that a party of French officers had been discovered tunnelling in the other wing. When they were caught, the Boches were not sure but that somebody had already gotten away — hence the extra call-over to make sure.

Then when the lights went out so mysteriously, their suspicions were, of course, further aroused, and the camp detective went around, hammering at all the bars with a sledge-hammer. It was four days before his usual day for this particular pastime, and of course when he came to our bar, it collapsed. So the game was up once more, and as a result of our work a slab of sheet iron was put up over the whole window, completely excluding the light.

The occupants of the cell next to mine, — number 42, — French and Belgian officers, hit upon a plan by which it might be possible to get out and fool the Boches at the same time.

They noticed that for some time it had been the habit of the Boches to change the interior guard once a week. When these changes took place, the Boche N.C.O. belonging to the party utilized the prisoner orderlies to carry out their palliasses (mattresses of sacks, stuffed with straw) accompanied under the guard of one of their N.C.O.'s.

A Belgian uniform was roughly transformed to look like a German N.C.O.'s uniform, so that it could not be detected by lamplight. When the usual day for changing guard arrived, one of the officers who spoke German perfectly, dressed up in the uniform, and had the rest of his pals waiting in the dark corridor, each with a palliasse on his back and well bent over their heads.

A moment before the guard should have turned out, which was always after dusk, the whole party calmly walked out of the corridor and out of the main gate, passing the guard on the way. They marched straight up to the drawbridge and demanded to be let through, the demand being made by the officer in the Boche uniform. They were let through, the second gate on the other side of the moat was also opened, and then they chucked their loads and made a bolt for the last line of defence which was a seven-foot stone wall, sprung over this, and were away!

Ten days passed, and no word came to us. We began really to believe that at last some good fellows had been successful. But on the eleventh day the whole troop were led back. They were in an awful condition. The trek had been too long, and the way too hard. Two of them could not walk for more than a month, their feet were so badly blistered and bleeding. "Well," we said, "they did n't succeed, but, by Gad, they did fool the Boches! " The thought cheered us up for quite some time.

I have stated before how some British officers and a Belgian escaped over the frozen moat. This was one of the finest efforts I have seen, as the chance of reaching the other side of the moat alive was almost *nil*. At the outset they had to rush over the caponiers from the interior exercise-grounds, in full view of the sentries

standing on the top of the caponiers, down the other side, a descent at an angle of 60°, to a depth of from fifty to sixty feet, on to the frozen moat, which was about sixty yards broad, and then race over open country under fire for about two hundred yards, and cross another canal which was not frozen. The sentries started firing before the escapers reached the moat, and kept on firing long after they had crossed. On this occasion the proverbial bad luck of the escaper cropped up. A military wagon came tearing down the usually deserted road to the fortress, and was brought to a standstill on the bridge which crossed the outer canal; a troupe of about eight or ten Boches poured from it, and in this way our unfortunate brother officers were caught.

CHAPTER X

BOUND FOR CREFELD

At the end of February we were surprised by a visit from two representatives of the American Embassy, to whom we poured forth our woes, and who declared their views pretty strongly as to the conditions in which they found us. The assault by the commandant on a defenceless French officer was fully narrated to them, also the fact that officers had been fired on inside the fortress whilst lying out in the earthworks. The American representatives made every effort with the commandant to procure more coal for heating our cells, also greater space for exercise, asking permission for us to again use the interior exercise-grounds *X* and *Y*, periodically closed to us as a general strafe, and permanently closed to us after the attempted escape of the British officers over the frozen moat.

As a result of this last visit from the representatives of the American Embassy, we were again allowed the use of the two interior exercise-grounds. This only lasted about three weeks, but we managed to get a considerable amount of fun out of it.

At that time the whole country was covered with a heavy pall of snow. Immediately "coasting" suggested

itself, and one or two of the officers secured permission to buy some cheap boys' sleds from the town. We improvised others, and on these rickety articles, the Russians, French, and British vied with each other in trying to break their necks down the precipitous banks of the interior earthworks.

About one hundred yards was the longest course obtainable. To essay this, one had to be an optimist, a fool, and a prisoner. We had to start the sled from the top of the highest gun platform. In about twenty feet, we had to get our impetus and turn a complete right angle, in order to shoot down a small path, leading down into the yard, a sheer drop of about fifty feet, to the gravel yard beneath. Some good fractures were secured in this way, but the exhilarating excitement was a wonderful nerve tonic. A rough game of hockey was also played on several occasions when we had the use of the yard.

Strangely enough, we were allowed to see the commission alone, but after our interview they proceeded to the commandant, who took them across to the so-called theatre or music-room, where doubtless the commandant went into raptures over the beauties and utilities of the theatre, forgetting to explain that we were not allowed into it and that the door was kept locked, so that possibly the commission went away with the feeling that after all the Boches were trying to

make up for the awful conditions existent in the fortress by giving us the use of an improvised theatre.

The amount of eyewash prepared in camps for a visit of any sort, either neutral or Boche, was extremely humorous to me. A camp would get busy like a hive for a couple of days before the visit, sweeping and cleaning in every corner, so that general conditions would improve for a day or two, and immediately after the visits they would lapse back into the old conditions of filth.

During the last few months an escaping scheme on a large scale had been under way from a cell quite close to my own. After many months of terrific manual labor a tunnel running from beneath the floor of the cell to the edge of the moat had been brought to successful completion. On the day of the night chosen for the attempt the never-ending bad luck of the escapers again ruined all these carefully laid plans. A large sewage-cart containing an enormous iron cylinder visited the camp for the purpose of pumping out the latrines. In order to reach these latrines the sewage-cart had to pass over the strip of ground dividing the cells of the fortress from the moat, and in so doing passed over the underground tunnel, which at this place was not more than three feet beneath the surface of the earth; and although the tunnel had been strengthened with every possible kind of wood torn from every hole and corner

inside the fortress, the weight of the cart was too much for it, and a deep rut showed in the ground after the cart had passed. This might have escaped the eye of the sentry on beat at this place, had not the cart passed over exactly the same spot on its return journey, thus causing a depression, which rapidly sank to about a foot deep. The sentry did not fail to see it, and the fact was reported to the quarter guard, whose investigation with picks and shovels soon revealed the truth, so that another accidental discovery was added to the list. When we found that no attempt had been made to drain the latrines for over two years, the extraordinary bad luck became a hundred times more exasperating to bear.

Those who have not witnessed or participated in these schemes would find it hard to believe the extraordinary amount of ingenuity that was displayed in their accomplishment. For instance, we needed a large pump for air, to be used when the tunnel had progressed so far that the air became too foul for a man to walk in, or for a candle to burn in. How was it possible to construct a pump or obtain piping? you might ask. A prisoner would answer you, — "Quite simple — all you need is the necessity, which is, as every one knows, the mother of invention." Thus does a prisoner's mind react.

As a matter of fact, the commandant allowed us to

buy waxcloth, or "American cloth," in order to cover the filthy, greasy tables allotted to each cell. If the stupid Boche had taken the trouble to count, he would have found that enough waxcloth had been bought to cover every table in the camp a hundred times over. Later on, their dull brains did find out the reason why the prisoners apparently fed on waxcloth, and then it was impossible to secure.

The waxcloth was cut into thin strips of about three inches wide, and beautifully sewn into tube lengths, glossy side innermost. Then came the grease from the wax candles from home, which were melted and poured and rubbed into the seam. Round this again was wound string, which came off of parcels from home, so as to protect the outside case. Each length was made so that one end would fit into the larger end of another length, and there you have a regular hose pipe, protected and air-proof.

The pump was really a pair of large bellows, made out of the frame of two chairs, hinged in the middle, and covered top and bottom with waxcloth, nailed to the wood with small nails, which we extracted from the soles of our boots. The waxcloth was then greased so as to exclude the air. The sides of the bellows were any sort of thick cotton fabric, usually Russian undershirts, saturated with paraffin wax, and rubbed over with lard or butter so as to be quite pliable, and at the same time

almost air-proof. The valve and nozzle were made out of somebody's soft bedroom slippers and an india rubber tobacco pouch.

When the excavator went down the tunnel to work, he had to have a rope tied to him, so that he might be hauled out should he faint in the foul air, or to give him the signal to stop work as the sentry passed over his head. The rope was made of cunningly entwined bootlaces cut into strips, bed-sheeting, and anything else that was obtainable.

The reader may wonder how it was the camp detective did not see the hole through the floor of the cell. We had asphalt floors, about two inches thick, beneath which were cement flags, and below that, stone pebbles and rubble. The asphalt was first well heated with flat irons, which we had for ironing our clothes, and when it was sticky, we carefully cut with a knife a hole large enough for a man to enter. The asphalt was remelted again onto a flat tray made of bed boards, so as to fit tightly into the square which had been cut out. The stone beneath was then picked up and the work of getting out stone and rubble commenced. At the end of each day or night's work, the tray of asphalt was put into position, and a red-hot iron seared over the joint, so that it was almost impossible to see that it had been moved. One must attend to every tiny detail if one would be successful on a job of this sort.

One of our greatest difficulties, however, was getting rid of the stuff which had been excavated. Outside the cell, in the corridor, a sentry was posted. Every grain of stuff had to pass him, without arousing his suspicions, in order to dump it down the holes used as latrines. We carried the stuff in capacious overcoat pockets, or in small bags made from underlinen, concealed under our clothes, as we passed to the latrines. Outside the latrines was another sentry. He must not hear the stuff falling, or his suspicions would be excited. But, above all, not a pebble or a grain must be spilled in transit, for the watchful eye of the camp detective would spot it, wonder where it came from, and a search would undoubtedly be instituted. Too, the excavations down the holes had to be covered with paper, in order that a flashlamp, shone down into their murky depths, might not disclose the secret.

There were two officers at the fortress who had previously made several gallant attempts to escape. One of them I held in the highest honor as the star performer amongst all the prisoners, of all nationalities, and who I deeply regret to say was killed on his fifteenth attempt. These two tried a new if somewhat disagreeable method. Their plan was to try and steal out in two large wooden boxes, used as dustbins for the refuse of the fortress. The two refuse boxes were kept inside the fortress, but emptied outside the

prison once a week, by prisoner orderlies and a conducting guard.

The first difficulty was to remove enough rubbish from the boxes to make room for their bodies, when the eyes of a sentry overlooked the place near where the boxes stood. This sentry marched up and down on a regular beat; it was, therefore, only when his back was turned that the two escapers could hope to get into the boxes without being seen.

In the end this part of the scheme was successfully accomplished. The two officers got into sacks stolen from the Boches and jumped into the boxes, and the rubbish was hastily piled in on top of them by their friends. All went well. They were lifted onto a cart and taken out of the fortress, pitched off the cart onto an old heap of rubbish outside the fortress, and left there. Evening began to close, and our hopes were high that all would be well with them. But, alas! It was not long before we saw our friends returning under guard.

Later we found out that the guards, after having seen the refuse and the sacks dumped out, had withdrawn, when some busybody of a civilian ragpicker came poking about in the mound of rubbish. It was not long before he discovered the sacks with their human contents, and with a shriek the guards were called, and the game was up. We also heard that it was a close shave for their lives, as the guards were perfectly in-

furiated at having been hoodwinked. And thus another scheme failed.

What, then, was the saving, uplifting influence which kept the mental balance of our prisoners intact? Two things: Pride of race to endure against hopeless odds, without loss of self-control and therefore self-esteem; and the constant, ever-present dream, by day and night, of escape and how to effect it. By day and night these dreams took solid form in plots and plans and schemes. They would be reasoned out, discussed, and tested, only to fail and fail again, until at last a superstition, a hopeless fatalism, grew up among us. We came to feel that the Almighty Power itself had decided against us; that we were deserted by both God and man.

Yet, somehow, after each failure, from somewhere a new hope was rekindled that, perhaps, after all there was no special dispensation of Providence which had decreed that we must always fail. The doubting man might laugh cynically on remembering our many despairing efforts, and look on us as confiding children. But laugh as he would, the little hope always, in the end, crept upwards, and eventually became master of the field, until even the doubter joined in new plans of escape.

At the end of March I was suddenly called up to interview General Peter, the commandant of the military

district of Ingolstadt. He addressed me very civilly, which was not his wont, and told me that I, along with two other British officers, was going to be removed to the best camp in Germany, owing to our exemplary behavior and gentlemanly conduct. I saluted and departed to inform my comrades in my cell, where laughter overcame me. My exemplary behavior! when everybody in the fortress knew that I had been described by the commandant as one of the most "dangerous characters" in the camp. Of course my mind instantly sought for the reason which had caused the Boches to decide on sending me away, and it was not long before I discovered it. I immediately consulted my French pal, and the two of us put our heads together and paid a visit to the commandant, but found no clue there. We then proceeded to the so-called *Krankenstube* (or sick-room). Seeing a lot of new medicines, I asked the orderly who they were for. He replied that the Swiss Commission was paying us a visit in a few days. The reasons of my removal to another and better camp were immediately explained. A great many inquiries had been made from home to the Swiss Commission regarding my case and the reason why I had not been sent to Switzerland on the last visit of the commission. The Boches, knowing this, had no intention that the commission should find me still an inmate of such a hell-hole as Fort 9, Ingolstadt.

On the morning of the 3d of April, or two days after old General Peter had told me I was to be sent to a nice camp because I had been a "good boy," orders to pack up my goods and chattels came from the commandant. My baggage had by this time grown to a very considerable bulk — my own spring-bed, folding camp-chair, box of foodstuffs, cooking-utensils, blankets, clothing, etc. The luggage had to be in the packet-room by three o'clock, in order that it might undergo the usual searching process. Immediately it was generally known in the camp that we were leaving Ingolstadt on the morrow, and that our luggage was to be sent to the packet-room by three o'clock, I received dozens of applications from the ever-watchful prisoners for permission to try to sneak out in my baggage. Permission was given to the first two applicants, French and English majors, one of whom occupied cell 42 with me. Two large hamper washing-baskets were borrowed from some Russian and French officers. Into these the two escapers were pushed, with blankets and clothing on top of them, and a cunning arrangement by which the padlock could be slipped from the inside.

The two hampers, together with my boxes and those of the other two officers accompanying me, were carried by ourselves at the appointed time to the packet-room, where each officer opened his own boxes in front of the examining Boche N.C.O., who made a quick

search of each box. In this case the two other officers had their luggage examined first; then came my turn. By this time he had grown a bit slack, and when he had gone through my three boxes he was still more so. The two baskets were left till the last. These were opened in their turn, and I began hauling out the top blankets. With a wave of the hand the N.C.O. said "Good," and the hampers were passed, as had been calculated upon. After this the N.C.O. called in some French orderlies, and gave directions for our luggage to be heaped up in a corner by itself. Unfortunately they placed one of the basket-hampers on the top of the other, which proved in the end to be the undoing of the whole affair.

The luggage having been passed, the packet-room was closed for the night, and there seemed to be a very fair chance that the escapers might be successful in at least getting out of the fortress. At 5 P.M. the usual guard was mounted outside the packet-room door, and all went well till about 7 P.M., when the escapers in the baskets essayed to get out of these in order to relieve the agonies of cramp which had naturally overtaken them in their confined position. There was no reason at all why they should spend the night in the baskets, as the packet-room would not be opened till seven o'clock the following morning. Even if a chance visit should happen to be paid to the room, there was plenty of material to hide behind amongst the general

débris of packets and bales which covered the floor. With this in view the officer in the upper basket tried to get out with the least possible noise. To raise the lid from the inside was easy, as before explained, but to get out noiselessly was quite another matter, since any movement in the basket above was registered by a loud creaking from the basket below, and before the two officers had succeeded in extricating themselves the suspicions of the sentry outside had been aroused, a search was instituted, and the plot discovered.

Returning to my own position, I now expected to receive a notification from the commandant that my removal to another camp was cancelled, owing to the fact that I had helped these two officers to escape in my luggage; but no such order was issued, which proved to me more strongly than ever that the authorities at Ingolstadt were most anxious to get rid of me for some very good reason, which I surmised was the expected visit of the Swiss Commission. Information now came through to us from one of the French orderlies that a party of officers, collected from all the other prison camps in and around Ingolstadt, was being sent to the camp at Crefeld on the following day. This information had been come by during a parley between the orderly and another French orderly, who had arrived at the fortress the preceding day from one of the camps which was being broken up. We felt

pretty certain, therefore, that our destination would also be Crefeld, since we were all going on the same day; also, if old General Peter had spoken the truth, it must be Crefeld, as he had said it was the best camp in Germany.

That night we received orders to be ready to start at five o'clock the next morning, and I had much to do and certain arrangements to make with the friends I was about to leave behind me, in case I should succeed in making good my escape. For many months past I had wearied of Ingolstadt and its appalling conditions, but now that I had actually to move off on the morrow a certain sense of loss to come and a feeling of extreme depression overcame me at leaving these good fellows. The camp was bad—nothing could be worse; but, still, the idea was borne in upon me, "Better to bear the ills we have," etc.; and God only knew what the future might have in store for me. One becomes extraordinarily attached to those of one's fellow beings with whom one has passed through great ordeals.

However, enough of the sentimental. Some of my pals were laying bets between themselves as to whether I should succeed in making my escape or not, and I 'm sure those who lost did so with the greatest pleasure. At 4.30 the next morning the three of us were sent for by the commandant, and went through the usual search, which we all passed quite satisfactorily. All the

same, a small corrugated iron spring, knife, bit of a screwdriver, compass, and electric torch escaped the watchful eyes of the Boches. Compass and spring were concealed in a hollow underneath the rubber heel of my boots. A small electric torch was hidden in a candle, carefully hollowed out, the torch inserted, and the candle filled up again with hot wax — a very difficult thing to do neatly so that it cannot be detected. A screwdriver, without a handle, of course, was concealed in the same way.

At 5.30 A.M. we shook the dust of the fortress from our feet. As before explained, there were three of us, and we had to walk over eight kilometres to the station. We had been ordered to take everything necessary for three days in the shape of food, clothing, etc., so the kindly Boches gave us a couple of orderlies to carry our hand luggage. I suppose I should have been both surprised and grateful at having any help at all, but really it was only a case of half a loaf being better than no bread, since two orderlies could not possibly carry the amount of our hand luggage; consequently we had a very hot and tiring walk, carrying the baggage on our shoulders, our guards making no effort to help. However, we did eventually arrive at the station, perspiring freely, although it was freezing at the time. At the station we were surprised to see a large dray loaded with luggage that looked very English, which

turned out to belong to a party of officers we discovered at the station. There were about twenty-five of them, as well as I can remember, consisting of a collection from all the camps in and around Ingolstadt.

Many inquiries were made when they found that we had just come from the notorious Fort No. 9. We learnt from these officers that we were bound for a camp called Crefeld, quite close to the Dutch frontier, and supposed to be the best camp in Germany. Satisfaction on going so near the frontier showed on many faces. About 7 A.M. our train arrived, and a second-class carriage was allotted to us by the German officer in charge of the party. Our guard consisted of this officer, who was a coarse bullet-headed Bavarian lieutenant, and about nine men, if I remember aright, all of them being fully armed and evidently warned to keep their eyes skinned. The Boche officer numbered us off and allotted so many officers to each compartment, together with one guard to each batch. When he came to us he said, "Oh, yes, Fort 9; you will be in a compartment by yourselves," and he told off three guards to watch us. This was not at all satisfactory, and looked very bad for our venture. However, there was no circumventing it, and the only thing was to accept the situation with the best grace possible and trust to our brains to outwit the three guards.

Towards 7.30 the train pulled out, at which I drew a breath of relief, feeling that Fort 9 at least was behind me, and in front enormous possibilities of escape. For the first time during two and a half years I was more or less fit; I was in a train travelling towards the northern frontier of Germany; every mile drew it and home nearer, and I had the delightful sensation that the German Government was about to be made to pay for at least a good part of my road towards home, travelling comfortably in a second-class railway compartment. That I was going to make good my escape from the train I was firmly convinced, although the circumstances of our disposition among the guards did not for the moment look very hopeful; but there was a sort of something in the air, excited quiverings running up and down my spine.

To carry out our project of ingratiating ourselves with our guards was a matter of immediate importance, since we could never tell how soon our chance might come. Accordingly we started by falling into amicable conversation with them, which was carried on with the aid of signs and a few words in broken French and German, only a very few German words being used, in order not to excite any suspicions that we could understand their conversation. In this manner we learnt one or two small points of interest: firstly, that we were not expected to arrive at our destination

till the evening of the next day, also that the camp we were bound for was indeed Crefeld.

By about eight o'clock the ball started rolling in good earnest, when one of the guards suddenly said, "Der Kriegist nicht gut." We agreed that war was hell and that we wanted to be back with our families in peace and with plenty to eat again, for there was "viel essen" in England; to which they replied, "Kein essen in Deutschland," and we answered that the prisoner of war felt the want of food in Germany more than the German soldiers did, but that we received plenty from home, so we did very well, at which I opened my suit-case and displayed to the greedy eyes of the Huns a whole lot of tinned meats of various kinds. This was a fine opportunity to cement our friendship, so we started to prepare a good sound breakfast of tongue and chicken, in which we succeeded in getting them to join us; they offered us a share of hot coffee from their water-bottles, and we all fairly settled down to it. Alas! with what pain I saw my limited food slipping down the Hun throats; but it was our best policy, and I must say that succeeding events justified us in giving them a decent meal. Two of the guards were now sufficiently at their ease to surrender to comfort, unfastening their belts and putting their rifles on the racks; the third, however, kept his rifle handy, but I do not think with any idea that it might be necessary. After break-

fast we all had a little snooze — at least we pretended to. Two of the Boches certainly dropped off for a little while.

About midday we arrived at a station, where the carriages were shunted, during which time we were allowed to stretch our legs on the platform and get some hot coffee from a stall which was not too awfully bad. Whilst we were bartering for the coffee a train pulled up at another platform, bringing in a quantity of newspapers for the day, over which there seemed to be a general hubbub of excitement; a few were brought to our platform, and we tried to bag one surreptitiously without success, but not before the headlines of the paper had been read by one or two of us. The news caused just as much excitement amongst ourselves as it had amongst the Boches, being no less than the official declaration of war by the United States. In ordinary times this would have given us a topic of conversation for months, but for the present we had other fish to fry, and we soon forgot all about it; at the same time we all felt excessively elated by the downcast, morose aspect of the Boche civilians at the railway station.

CHAPTER XI

WE JUMP FROM THE TRAIN

To return to our own affairs. When the train started off again, we made up our minds that we must find out everything there was to know about the carriages we were now in. To do this it would be necessary to visit the other compartments, without of course arousing the suspicions of any of the guards. Accordingly I again entered into conversation with one of them, and asked him how many prisoners there were in the train, if they were all going to the same camp, had they just been taken prisoners or were they old ones, from what camps did they come, etc. I then hinted that I thought I'd stroll along and have a talk to them; perhaps some belonged to my own regiment. This did not seem to perturb him at all, as indeed there was no reason why it should, seeing that the carriage was made up of six compartments, which had been partitioned off with a gangway running down one side. Sometimes one comes across them in this country, and by standing up and looking over the seat one can see into the next compartment. Accordingly I strolled along to the next compartment, and sat down with the fellows there and soon got into animated conversation. I noticed, how-

ever, that one of the guards had followed me and was standing in the gangway. After about half an hour he got tired of this and went back to his seat, and a few minutes after I also returned to my own seat. This seemed to put him quite at his ease, and by the time the evening arrived I had visited all the compartments, and found, to my great joy, that the rear one held four officers without a guard at all.

It was now necessary to find out the disposition of the Boche officers and the remaining guard, which we did not discover till about 10.30 that evening, when we arrived at some town to put up for the night. The name of the place I don't know, as I could see no name written up anywhere, for there were very few lights showing on the station, and it was a pitch-dark night. On detraining, we were marshalled into a sort of Red Cross shelter on the platform, where we waited about three quarters of an hour, after which we were formed into fours and marched a distance of about a mile and a half through the town to a big building, evidently some kind of educational institution temporarily turned into a receiving hospital. Here we were ushered into a large hall, no doubt used before the war as a gymnasium, and now full of collapsible camp-beds. On these we were informed we must sleep till four o'clock the next morning, when we should again march off. These beds looked very enticing to a great many of us, and

personally I took the full benefit out of the one allotted to me, as I felt sure that it would be many a long weary day before I got the chance of another good rest — if indeed I ever would need one again in this life. The night passed without incident, and we were well guarded.

The next morning at 4.30 we marched off again and reached the station about 5 A.M. Here we were once more marshalled into the Red Cross rest station where we had been the previous night. Hot coffee, bread, and a piece of blood sausage were dealt out to us, at a price; but I for one was very thankful, for it was the last meal I was to have for five days, although of course I did not know it at the time.

At six o'clock we again entrained, and I noted with satisfaction that we were to have the same carriage as that of the previous day. Unfortunately it was now the leading one of the train, because any one attempting to leave our carriage must inevitably be seen by any person looking out of those in the rear. I made especial note of the whereabouts of our conducting officer, and found that he and the guard I had missed the night before were located in the next carriage to ours. As in English "Pullmans," one could pass from one carriage to another the whole length of the train, and I suppose he felt that he had us sufficiently under his eyes from the next carriage.

On taking our allotted places in our carriage, we were delighted to find that the front compartment, which had been the rear one the previous day, was again without a guard. Nothing of any note happened till after dawn broke, when we crossed the Rhine at Frankfort, and towards 10 A.M. we drew up at a wayside station, and were again allowed to descend and stretch our legs. This time there was nothing to be got in the way of food or drink, and it was freezing very hard; so I and my two companions, finding a small waiting-room, went in and shut the door — in order to keep warm, of course! After about ten minutes the whistle went for the train to start, but our conducting officer had discovered he had not got his full complement of prisoners, and by the noise he made in shouting at his men he seemed to be pretty much excited over it. During a wild and flurried search we were discovered innocently doing nothing; and although we got pretty roundly cursed, there is no doubt that it helped to allay any suspicion on their part that we might be possible escapers, so much so that when the train actually went off one of the three guards was removed from our compartment after a whispered consultation with the Boche officer, and went to join his comrade in the officers' compartment. This left us with two in our compartment, and things began to look better for us. From this on nothing of any particular note happened

till midday, except that I felt exactly as if I were going to step into a dentist's chair, and the clock seemed as if it were at a standstill, although the train was now moving a good deal faster than it had done hitherto.

About one o'clock we stopped at a station, where we got rid of another of our guards, who, suddenly discovering that his pal who had joined the other guard had taken his grub with him, went off in search of it — and, to our joy, he did not return. We were now left with only one guard in our compartment and four others in the compartment in front of us. After we moved off the train gathered speed, and our hopes began to descend again. If the train continued like that to the end of the journey, to jump would be out of the question. This was immediately after the sentry had been moved, and we found ourselves with only one sentry in our compartment.

We looked at each other, and unanimously said, "Well, what about it?" Supposing we successfully made good our escape, we must be able to travel with the greatest possible speed towards that part of the Dutch frontier which we believed to be the best place for an attempt, and, owing to its situation amongst the swamps, would probably be less carefully guarded. Our progress across Germany was going to be very seriously hampered by the fact that we were without a map of the actual frontier, and only in possession of a

small piece of map about three inches square, showing the railway system on which we were actually running, and this was not even correct according to a large tin map showing the German northwest railway system which was nailed to the wall of the compartment.

We therefore set to work to learn by heart this map, in so far as it was likely to affect our possible route, and in order to get a definite idea of our exact position on the railways, when the time came to make the attempt. This was done, of course, by carefully noting the stations one by one as we passed them in the train and referring to the map.

Personally that map seemed to have burnt its equivalent into my brain, particularly the branches which led westward and passed over numerous small rivers and eventually over a chain of lakes, which spot would ultimately be our objective. We then sketched a rough plan of how the attempt was to be brought to a successful issue. My plan being accepted by the other two, it was decided that I was to have the right of trying first — the other two tossing up with a coin for right of second place. This being decided, another important factor had to be discussed, the issue at point being that, firstly, there were some twenty-five or so other British officers in the compartments in rear of us. The last of these compartments was without a guard, and was therefore the best one to escape from. Secondly, there

might be some of these officers in other compartments who intended to take an opportunity, should it occur. If they did so without our knowledge, it would ruin our chance; and, on the other hand, if we attempted to escape without their knowledge, we should equally spoil their chance. Since we were all British officers together, we decided to make it known to those who looked or acted as if they were looking for a chance to leave the train.

Accordingly I left our compartment, and entered into conversation with the officers in all the other compartments in turn, but saw no signs of any preparations until I reached the last two compartments, where I found evidences of suppressed excitement. The sentry in my own compartment did not seem to mind my visiting the others where, as he knew, I came under the eye of the sentry in charge of each compartment. The fact that there was no sentry in the last one had evidently escaped him. I discovered six other officers who talked of making an attempt, and discussed my plans with the senior and two others of these, after which I returned to my own compartment and companions.

I then proceeded to the lavatory, to which I was followed by the sentry, who posted himself outside, letting down the window on the lavatory side of the train and leaning out. This was in order that I might not get out of the lavatory window without his knowledge. In

the lavatory I first cut the communication-cord; then, taking a galvanized spring which I had concealed in the heel of my boot, I tied the broken rear end of this cord to one of the communication-cord pull-throughs, in order that it might be pulled in the corridor behind me, and spring back into its place without transmitting the signal farther up the train. This done, I removed my rucksack, made of sacking, from between the lining of my trench-coat, and put into it the remains of my food brought on the journey. I then put the rucksack on my back, and, coming out of the lavatory, I manœuvred so that the sentry walked in front of me on our way back to the compartment, in order that he might not see that I had grown a hump-back. On being seated, I again studied the railway map in our compartment, until I felt that I had off by heart the general directions of the railways that would be likely to help us *en route*.

The next thing was to get the door of the carriage in the rear compartment open. Before leaving our end of the train, we decided that, as a signal to go, I should drop my handkerchief out of the window on the left-hand side of the train, since an attempt must, if possible, take place from the right side — firstly, because the right side contained the corridor passage, and, secondly, the sentry could not possibly fire on us from a moving train on the right side, unless they were left-

hand shots, which risk we had to take, though the chances were very much in our favor. Again I paid a visit to our friends in the rear compartments, and informed them that, as soon as dusk set in, we would make the attempt — sooner, if the train slackened speed sufficient to give us the least feasible opportunity.

We were just then passing the thickly wooded country near Bonn, and the views were quite delightful. The light began to fail fast, and my nerves were strained to the highest tension. Getting into communication with the sentry in the next carriage, I began enlarging on the beauties of the view, asking this or that question, at which he was highly delighted. In fact, we got on so well that before many minutes were up I had the window down, and was leaning half out on my right side. Whilst we were unanimously praising a special little bit, my right hand crept down almost to the full length of my arm outside the window, and lifted the outside latch, after which I lost interest in the view, and the sentry returned to his compartment, whilst I went to the rear one. The train up to this time had been running at a speed of about fifty miles an hour, which gave us no chance, considering we had to jump on to metal rails and sleepers filled in with broken granite.

At about seven o'clock we ran into a small station, and thought our chance would come as we drew out

before the train could gather speed; but just as we drew out, on reaching a level crossing, we found a company of Boche soldiers drawn up on both sides of the line, and the chance was left behind. At this moment we discovered a strange Boche had entered the compartment. He turned out to be a railway official come to turn on the light. He remained with us for a few minutes only. To us it seemed an eternity. Would he never go! At last he went farther up the train, and we began to draw into another small town; but the train stopped in front of another level crossing, with a crowd of Boche civilians on both sides.

After about a minute the train moved off again and gathered speed with great rapidity. We could see the lights of a big town about a mile in front of us. This might be our destination, but we did not know. I informed my confederates that in my opinion it was now or never. The impossibility of jumping at that moment seemed to be deeply impressed on everybody but myself. However, I dropped the handkerchief, and, crossing to the other side, turned the handle and jumped out. Picking myself up, I sprinted in the opposite direction to that in which the train was moving, keeping to the centre of the track. It was impossible to leave the line here, since both sides were lined with houses; so I rushed on, hoping for a gap in the houses towards the open country. Passing the level crossing, I noticed the

barriers beginning to rise and the crowd of civilians preparing to pass over. I heard a cry behind me and the patter of running feet, and thought a crowd was following, at which I redoubled my efforts, but soon realized that my long imprisonment had told upon me, and that I could not go much farther.

Then it dawned on me that I could run better without my trench-coat. Visions arose of the long wet trek in front of me, and the possibilities of rheumatic fever without it; but my breath was going fast, so there was no alternative. Accordingly, as I ran I threw the precious coat from me. By this time I was very nearly done, and the weight of the rucksack containing my food for the journey made my shoulders ache, so that I threw that off also. Another fifty yards and the end of the town was in sight, but before this I espied a gap in the houses, for which I made. This only led to a *cul-de-sac*. The only alternative was to cross a fence into a garden, and then another and another, through a wire fence and into a kitchen garden. In a few minutes I was joined by three others, whom, to my joy, I discovered to be three of my companions of the rear compartment. Here we rested, and I got out my concealed compass, in order to take down bearings. This done, in about a quarter of an hour we prepared to make a start.

We first ran into a large house and garden sur-

rounded by barbed wire, into which we pushed our way, only to find ourselves temporarily trapped, as we could find no way of exit on to the road at the other side, so that we had to retreat by the way we had come and make a détour round the house, to find ourselves confronted by a main road, with occasional pedestrians passing along it. By now the moon had begun to rise, which enabled us to see a good distance ahead, but at the same time increased the danger of our being observed. Fortunately, she providentially went behind thick fleecy clouds. Thinking the road in front of us too dangerous an obstacle to cross at this point, we made a détour of about half a mile, and again took compass bearings, which bearings we took periodically, when it suddenly struck me we were travelling directly towards the moon, and therefore almost south, at least southwest, which was not our object at all. Again we took a bearing with the compass, which seemed to prove me wrong; but I obstinately refused to believe myself wrong, and this led to trouble between myself and the senior officers of our expedition.

To take a bearing properly and correctly was quite a difficult feat. It consisted of lying on the ground covered by somebody else's coat, in order to light a match in safety without attracting attention, otherwise we found it impossible to set the compass sufficiently accurately. On removing the glass from the

compass, it was discovered that the agate bearing was cracked, which caused the compass to swing and stick. This must have happened in my jump from the train. I did not at first convey this information to my comrades, thinking that it might cause too great consternation; for it must be remembered that they had all been strangers to me a few hours before, and I was not therefore sure of the type and calibre of the men I had to deal with.

For a few hundred yards we carried on, when, to the disgust of the others, I again decided to take a bearing, over which I spent a great deal of time, carefully placing the compass-point towards the edge of the agate bearing, and allowing it to swing gently to a stop. Although the needle was not balanced in the centre, it was sufficiently so to enable it to swing freely; then, taking a careful line of the exact direction of west, in conjunction with the rising moon, the Pole Star and Cassiopeia, I set a direct course, from which, with the exception of slight deflections for the purpose of avoiding dangerous obstacles encountered on our route, we never swerved until after we crossed the Dutch frontier. It was hard work to make time by forced marching, since we had to watch the ground for pitfalls for the feet and the heavens for direction.

Shortly after taking the last bearing we crossed another railway line of sorts and a station brilliantly lit

up, and here it seemed to our excited imagination that the people inside the brilliantly lit train-cars drawn up at one of the stations were interested or excited about something. All the occupants had their noses glued to the glass, looking at something or other, whilst the powerful head-lamps were sweeping the country around, often lighting up our prostrate forms as if it were day. Innumerable cars seemed to come and go, and we dared not move under such conditions. Soon, however, to our intense relief, the trains slacked off, and we were able to make a good steady advance. It began to freeze very hard, the clouds vanished, and the moon became intensely brilliant, which of course helped us immeasurably; but we could not see it then, as our nerves were too much on edge. Personally I felt as if I were naked and the whole world was watching with bated breath. The heavy frost also helped us, since we were sticking entirely to the open country, mostly over ploughed fields, and instead of the usual slow advance one makes over plough we walked on it as on pavement, so that we made excellent progress. At the same time caution guided our every movement. We never crossed a road without scouting it beforehand, or came upon a farm or even a shed without making a wide détour round it. What we feared more than anything else was that a dog might start barking, and cause its owner to come out to see the reason.

When I look back at that first trek, I come to the conclusion that fortune favored us for once. I don't think we ever made a false step, which was luck indeed. We walked hard till about 3 A.M., and then found ourselves approaching a main road, with what appeared to be two big villages situated not more than half a mile apart. A scout went forward to investigate, but came back scared and excited. Moving lights appeared first here and there; sometimes red flashes came and went. We immediately decided that we had been surrounded, only to find on closer investigation that the lights belonged to a single-track railway, which seemed to run in a semicircle around us. On crossing the railroad and railtrack beyond, we began to realize for the first time that dawn was rapidly approaching. Lights began to spring up in the large village to our left, so that we were immediately forced to look for a place where we could safely hide during the coming daytime. This proved to be no easy job, and before we were finally settled it was very nearly broad daylight.

CHAPTER XII

ESCAPES BY NIGHT AND DAY

UNFORTUNATELY, not being of a literary turn of mind, I am unable to write a thrilling account of our adventurous journey across Germany. At the same time, where in my description I make such a statement as "We now made our way across country without interruption for four hours," the reader must not imagine that we just rushed along without encountering difficulties, for the way was always beset with some sort of obstacle or other. Needless to say, we gave ourselves a great many unnecessary scares; but in our highly strung condition, with all our senses working at fever-heat, this was not to be wondered at.

The uncertain moonlight played tricks with our imaginations, everything assuming gigantic proportions. All the forces of nature seemed to be arrayed against us and to walk hand in hand with the enemy. If a slight wind rustled the leaves of a solitary tree to our rear, we felt we were discovered and followed, and must press on, only to fall on our stomachs again after a few hundred yards, as there was something standing in front and waiting for us, inevitable, grim, and silent. "Look! he has moved; it's a sentry! Did you notice the

light shining on his bayonet?" — and so we would creep away to right and left, only to find that our grim sentry was a large post marking some boundary, and the apparent flash of the bayonet had probably been caused by the rays of the moon suddenly appearing from behind a cloud and striking one of its white painted sides.

To return to facts. The spot in which we were forced to hide, for want of a better place, was on the edge of a small wood, consisting of a number of old and rotten trees, with a very thick carpet of decayed leaves, which, being frozen, made the most infernal crackling noise under our feet, as we searched to and fro for the best place of concealment. Being winter, there was not sufficient foliage to enable us to hide in the trees themselves with any safety. After exploring the wood in vain, we eventually had to take up our position in a natural drain running along the edge of the wood. This afforded us very little covering; a few blackberry brambles and small branches were hastily snapped off, and pulled in on top of us. By raising our heads a little above the drain a view of the surrounding country could be obtained, and the railway line and main road connecting the two small towns which we had crossed early in the morning were in plain view.

After careful examination of our position, I came to the conclusion that we had managed to find almost the

identical spot that I had planned out as the most desirable one for the termination of our first trek, as shown on the map of our railway carriage, both because of its position in relation to a network of small railways to which we must depend for direction, and to the fact that it lay almost in a direct line, if taking the shortest route to the frontier; so that, with the exception that we had not enough cover for safety, we had not done so badly, and had in reality made very good progress from our starting-off place the night before, and, what was more important than anything else, I felt pretty certain of our exact situation.

At the approach of dusk on the following evening it would be necessary, according to my prearranged plan, to strike due north for about ten miles, in order to find two light railroads running west, which bridged two small rivers and the Dutch-German Grand Canal, and also passed over the dangerous swampy ground through which our course lay. Could we find either of these railroads we should again know our position, and by keeping to the tracks as far as possible make better progress, with the chance of being able to use the bridges, should they be unguarded.

The reader will no doubt ask why I proposed to take so difficult and dangerous a route, leading as it did right through the centre of the swamps. My reasons were threefold. First, because I was firmly convinced

that the Boches would place so much confidence in the natural obstacle presented by the swamps that any sort of guard would appear superfluous. Secondly, the country through which we were trying to pass is the most thickly populated part of Germany. By making for the swamps, therefore, we should almost entirely obviate the chances of being seen by pedestrians. Thirdly, because it was the shortest way, which, situated as we were without food or the necessary warm clothing, would become a factor of primary importance before many hours had passed.

To return to the early hours of the morning after our first night's trek, as we lay half concealed in the drain bordering the little wood before described. My first feeling was one of intense relief at the thought of a day's rest in front of me, for my whole body ached after the unwonted exercise. I tried to compose myself to sleep, but the natural excitement of mind caused by the happenings of the last twenty-four hours proved this to be very difficult, and it was some time before I eventually dropped off into a troubled slumber, only to wake up within the hour suffering from cramp and stiff with cold. To make matters worse, the ground underneath me had thawed with the warmth of my body, and I was now wet through all down one side. If only we could have got a good hot meal to take the shivers out of us, things would have assumed a differ-

ent aspect. The sound of occasional voices wafted to us on the wind from the highroad before mentioned kept us continually alert to our danger; but the first real anxiety was brought about by an old woodcutter who paid a visit to our little wood, evidently looking for a piece of old timber, and before very long he settled down to work not more than sixty yards from us. The regular chomp, chomp of an axe told us that he at any rate had discovered nothing suspicious; but of course all prospects of further sleep vanished until his departure at midday with a barrowful of wood.

About this time I for one began to get ravenously hungry, and forthwith made a meal of a precious piece of chocolate. A sixpenny bar of Cadbury's chocolate does not go very far after a long march, but as I had nothing else whatever it had to do. Don't let the reader imagine I greedily ate the lot. Oh, no! I took about three quarters of it, sufficient for the day, but at the same time I thought with longing of my improvised rucksack and the good things it contained, either lying on the Bonn-Düsseldorf railway line or elating the greedy spirit of some beastly Boche.

After the departure of the old woodcutter the day passed fairly peaceably until about 3 P.M., when the barking of a dog in our near vicinity "put our wind up," as the expression goes. Suddenly the stillness of the wood was rudely broken by the sound of a shot,

and we could distinctly hear the fall of a bird as it crashed through the trees with a thud to earth, followed by the yapping of the dog as it ran its quarry down. The hunter then tramped all over the wood, tapping the trees, evidently in search of more sport, and in so doing he passed within ten yards of us. All this time we lay with our bodies pressed to earth in a perfect agony of doubt. As for myself, it seemed impossible that the hunter could fail to hear the wild pounding of my heart; but the danger passed, and again silence reigned in the little wood.

Not for long were we to be left in peace. The old woodcutter returned, and this time he took up his position a good bit nearer than before, and chopped away hard till nearly dusk, when at last he again went off with his old barrow. If one carefully analyzes one's feelings and sensations in moments of excitement such as these, through what extraordinary vicissitudes does imagination lead one. For instance, in the almost infinitesimal space of time between the report of the hunter's gun and the sound of his quarry dropping to earth I lived a lifetime. We had been seen; we were surrounded; armed men had been sent to take us; we would be led back in triumph to the hell that awaits prisoners; and then the sound of the quarry falling through the trees, the swift realization that the enemy is only hunting game and not you, the wild relief and

the bodily demand for a drop of brandy or something to pull one's self together, which follows after all great mental strain.

About dusk we crept out of our old drain into the shelter of the wood, stiff with cramp and cold, but with the glorious feeling that so far we were safe, that we were already twenty-five miles nearer home, and that another night of swift action lay before us, at the end of which we would, please God, be still nearer. At 7 o'clock we again started trekking. Little of moment happened to us during the early part of the evening, and by 9.30 we had made a good ten miles, and were casting round for the railway for which we were in search. Our progress now became very slow; thick white clouds obscured the face of the moon; a rapid thaw had set in, and our way was barred by a series of deep rivulets running through an old and decayed wood stretching for many miles on each side of us. Here we very soon lost all idea of direction, and decided to retrace our steps as best we could and strike still farther north.

By good luck we came within a hundred yards or so of the spot from where we had started before entering this wooded country. Having got our direction again, we struck north, to find ourselves getting into more marshy country as we advanced. After having walked for some distance over wet fields of a spongy

nature, sometimes up to our knees in water, we came upon a small river, which we followed northwards until we struck the much-hoped-for railway-track that we were in search of, running due west and cutting the river at right angles, in accordance with my previous calculation. Making sure there was no sort of guard on the bridge, we drew ourselves out of the marsh, to stand with relief for a moment on the firm dry track, before passing over the bridge and proceeding on our adventures.

Pushing on again, we kept to the track as long as it ran due west, and within a few miles struck the second river which we had hoped to find, and thus placed a formidable obstacle behind us. Our exact position was now known with relation to the network of railways on which our minds were concentrated. The line which we were now on would run due west for a mile or two, and then bend southward in a big curve before running in a northwesterly direction again, when it would bridge the Grand Canal. Our object was now to make use of this bridge if possible, but we did not feel justified in remaining on the line until the bridge was reached, owing to the fact that, as far as we could remember the map, there appeared to be a station or siding through which the line ran soon after it began to turn southward. Accordingly we stuck to the rails as long as they ran westward, after which we left the

track with the very greatest reluctance, to again plunge into the marsh, maintaining our fixed purpose of travelling northwestward whenever possible.

Very soon the sight of our friendly track was lost to view, and we had not advanced more than a mile or two before we began to consider that perhaps we should have done better to stick to it, whatever the consequences, as the difficulties of advancing through the marsh were becoming more serious as we proceeded. We were now well over our knees and often up to the waist in water and slime. The moon had unveiled herself, much to our discomfort, and before very long she was shining in a cloudless sky, which caused us to call a halt for the purpose of consultation as to the best procedure under the circumstances. Was it best to go on as we were? We were doing fairly well, but making a terrific noise in advancing through the marsh, which was absolutely unavoidable. Four people cannot push their way through mud and slush nearly up to their waists without making a disturbance. This was well enough so long as it was dark. If any of the enemy did happen to be in the neighborhood, they would probably conclude that the noise in the marsh was caused by cattle; but now that we could see almost as well as if it were day, we could therefore just as easily be seen in turn. The sight of four men wading through dangerously swampy country in the middle of the night in

close proximity to the frontier in war-time would raise the suspicions of the most simple-minded.

However, our consultation did not lead to any better results, and we were losing valuable time. The general opinion turned out to be contrary to retracing our steps, for many reasons: first, the fear of losing our direction; secondly, if we did strike the railway line again, we might be forced to leave it, and find ourselves in the same position that we were now in. Should we happen to run up against somebody, the impossibility of finding to what extent these marshes extended to our right and left, without running grave risk and again losing time, and many other minor reasons, decided us to proceed as rapidly as the difficulties of our route would permit.

Within a couple of miles we found ourselves, to our great joy, on the banks of the expected Grand Canal. When I say banks, we were standing up to our waists in water and long lush grass, a heavy damp white mist hung over everything, and we could just see over the other side of the canal, which was evidently a great deal more swampy than our side. Large patches of water, unbroken by reeds, gleamed here and there. To swim the canal would be easy, but to advance on the other side looked impossible. Accordingly we decided to follow the canal westward as best we could, in the hope of striking the railway line again, which

must bridge the canal in some place or other in our near vicinity. Hardly had we proceeded a couple of hundred yards or so, when the expected bridge suddenly loomed out of the mist.

The natural elation caused by the sight of this bridge was quickly damped as we approached, for there on the far side of the bridge was a small black shed. It appeared as if this would be one of those occasions where we should be forced to take a risk. Accordingly we advanced to the track with the least possible noise, taking the very greatest care to prevent any rustling of the reeds in our path, climbed to the track, and lay on our stomachs whilst we took a cautious survey. After a few minutes' reflection I rose to my hands and knees, and crawled up to and over the bridge, and lay within ten feet of it on the other side, where I could distinctly hear a gentle snore, that told of some sort of human inmate; also I now noticed for the first time a very thin wisp of smoke curling up from the cabin chimney — this we had not been able to see before, owing to the thickness of the mist. The fellow in the cabin, soldier or civilian, whoever he was, continued to give out comforting little snores. Accordingly I signalled to the rest of my companions to crawl over as I had done, and one by one they succeeded in doing so without making any appreciable sound, but for me waiting on the other side it seemed as if each one took a lifetime. But the bridge

guard slept on, and we all crossed with perfect safety, to immediately push off again down the track with the utmost possible speed, in order to leave this unwelcome neighborhood behind.

Now that we had put the two rivers and the Grand Canal behind us, we felt that we had done a very good night's work, even if we made no more progress that night; but it was only 1.30 A.M., and we had at least three if not nearly four hours before daybreak, in which another ten miles might be made. As we advanced along the track the land to our right and left grew gradually more swampy; sometimes large expanses of shining water came into view on either side of us, and we thanked our stars we had risked the bridge, as, had we essayed to pass through country like this, our progress would have become *nil*, even if we survived drowning.

Within a couple of miles the land gradually began to take on a drier aspect, until eventually dry ground showed on both sides of us. Here we took a general survey of our direction by the aid of the stars, and found we were travelling north by east. This had to be corrected, so we now left the track on which we had made such excellent progress, and struck off west over dry land, which led us to a series of gently sloping hills, looking something like the downs at home. Every bit of available ground was under cultivation, and on several

occasions dogs barked out their warning from small farms which we passed.

The difficulties of keeping direction were now fully brought home to us. For instance, we would approach a block of farm buildings, and, in order to prevent attracting the attention of any dogs, we would make a half-circle round the buildings and strike off northward by the stars on the other side. In this manner we must have dropped some distance southward, instead of working north, as was afterwards proved, although we were always travelling west. It is practically impossible to tell when you have made a circle round a village or building without sufficient landmarks to guide you, and at night it becomes an impossibility. We would walk round a village or other obstacle which we wished to avoid, till it seemed to us that we had more than half-circled it; but in reality we probably only went about a quarter the distance round. At one place a dog followed us up almost to the top of one of these rolling fields, and barked until we thought he must alarm the whole of Germany. Meanwhile we lay with our noses pressed to earth; the moon was at her brightest; and we were on the highest ground, and could certainly be seen from a great distance. Consequently we did not appreciate the attentions of the dogs in advertising our presence in the neighborhood.

In order to avoid the chance of our figures being seen

against the sky-line, we crawled over the hilltop until we were well over and down the other side, which brought us to more plough, ending in a densely wooded region of thickets, through which we at first essayed to pass, but found it no easy matter without making a lot of noise, caused by the snapping of the dried undergrowth through which we tried to force a passage. Withdrawing from what seemed a dangerous area, we held a hurried consultation, which ended in our deciding to split up into pairs and make our way through this region of undergrowth at two different points, some distance from each other, and meet on the other side if possible. Should we fail to meet directly, it was no good wasting time looking for each other.

Anyhow, we were rapidly approaching the spot where we might find it necessary for the safety of our project to split up into pairs, as four people are much more likely to be seen than two. And we had no intention of essaying the actual frontier or its immediate environment at our present strength, though we might probably attempt it singly or in pairs.

CHAPTER XIII

WE HIDE IN A DRAIN

It must have been a good hour before we eventually got clear of the thickets, and our passage through them had been a pretty noisy one. No sign of the other pair could be seen, so that after scouting round for about twenty minutes we moved off again.

My companion was Captain Stewart, of the R.F.A., and a more stanch fellow in a hazard of this kind could not possibly be desired. From this time on we made excellent progress through the night, and nothing of note happened until just before the break of dawn, when we had great difficulty in finding a suitable place to hide in during the day. Eventually we discovered a ditch between two fields, in which we passed the day without incident. The extreme cold, coupled with the want of food, was beginning to tell on us, as we lay too weary to care very much what happened, so long as only the night would come, that we might push on again and get some circulation in our limbs. At about 7 P.M. we started to rub our feet and legs, which appeared quite dead, and at 7.30 pushed off at a good pace. Before long we felt quite warm and comfortable,

with the exception of a gnawing sensation in the vitals, owing of course to lack of food.

From here on till about one in the morning no incident worthy of record happened — only the same careful skirting of villages and farms, keeping always to the open country, and avoiding all paths and roads like the plague. About one o'clock, to our surprise, we struck a railway line running southwest. This we followed, not on the line, but parallel with it, at a distance of about a hundred yards. Once or twice we heard voices on level crossings. The reason of our following the railway was that we had not expected to meet one so soon — in fact, not until the following night, and then we calculated we should have to turn south for quite ten miles in order to find it. This railway would be of enormous importance to us; it should run over some small rivers, the Grand Canal, and an artificial embankment, constructed through the centre of a lake, and thus dividing it in two, both of which portions were connected on either side by a series of small lakes, stretching north and south respectively, and were, I presumed, the means by which the surrounding low-lying country was inundated.

These small lakes, which should run parallel with the frontier, according to the maps we had seen, formed a very serious obstacle to our advance. It was therefore of the greatest importance to find some

means to help us over the difficulty, and this railway seemed to be the only one. If the railway we were now following passed between two small towns situated nearly opposite to one another, and then passed through a third within a mile or so of the last two, then this was the line running through the lakes which we had hoped eventually to strike, in which case we had inadvertently come across it, and were a great deal nearer the frontier than we had thought possible. However, we did not credit such good luck for a moment; for, in reasoning the matter out, we must have dropped a good ten or twelve miles south from where we had started the previous night in order to be anywhere near this railway line. To our great satisfaction, in carrying out our intention of following this chance line, at about 3.30 A.M. we passed between two small towns, this time walking on the track itself, and leaving it again when we were well clear of the outskirts.

Pushing forward at our very best speed till about four o'clock, we found ourselves approaching another town, through which the railway ran. A careful survey showed a station and several sidings. During this investigation we found the inhabitants were preparing for the coming day, and, looking at our watches, discovered, to our consternation, that it was nearly five o'clock. Where could we find a suitable hiding-place? We had n't passed anything on the way that would

give shelter to a rat, so there was nothing to be gained by retracing our steps. To try to walk round the town might end in our being caught by the daylight, having found no place of concealment. The only possible procedure in these circumstances was to pass through the town on the track as best we could. Accordingly we moved off, sometimes crawling on hands and knees wherever we saw anything that we were not quite sure of. We tried to get under big heaps of timber and steel rails lying beside the track, but no consolation in the shape of a hiding-place of any sort offered itself.

We had proceeded through the town in safety, but were brought up sharp by a party of workmen coming along the line from an opposite direction. Fortunately we were practically on the outskirts, so that we were able to dodge into a small garden till they passed. By this time the whole town seemed to be awake, the usual warning lights springing up in the cottages all round us, and day was just about to break. Passing through the garden in our frantic endeavors to discover some place, we found ourselves in a small fir wood — through which we rushed, heedless of the noise we were making. Anything to get away from this dangerous spot! Why had we come near the beastly town at all? What fools we were to be caught by the oncoming daylight in such a dangerous place! These and other thoughts crowded through our minds as we rushed ahead.

Leaving the wood behind us — for we could find no place either in the trees or underneath them that a squirrel could hide in — we found ourselves in more or less open country. Only the lights of a few scattered cottages gleaming here and there showed that we were not out of the danger zone yet. A little way to our left we spotted another small wood or clearing that looked as if it might offer shelter of some kind. To this we advanced with as much caution as possible, only to find no undergrowth of any kind.

Things began to look desperate, voices were heard on all sides of us, and a man came tramping through the clearing in which we were. Throwing ourselves down, we waited with bated breath for him to pass. As soon as he had disappeared I'm afraid we lost our heads for a short space. Beneath our feet was a thick carpet of dead leaves. The ridiculous idea that we could hide ourselves beneath these struck us both simultaneously, and with one accord we fell on our knees and began frantically scratching up the leaves in wild despair until we got down to the rotten mossy bed beneath, and after a few minutes succeeded, with broken and bleeding nails, in scratching a hole large enough to hold our bodies; but to pull the leaves over us from the inside, so that they would look undisturbed, we found to be an impossible task.

For a moment or so I lay back in the little grave I

had dug and gave myself up to despair, and then suddenly it dawned upon me that this was not the way to make a successful escape. We were in a very bad position, but we were not acting with the coolness necessary to bring about a successful issue to our project. Forthwith I jumped up, and the two of us moved out of the clearing and scouted through the open country, travelling in what we thought must be a westerly direction. Very soon we espied another small clearing, this time to our right. Immediately we made our way to it with the utmost caution, only to find that here also there was no place of concealment. But on leaving this clearing on the farther side we came across a deep drain about two feet broad and four feet deep, with four inches of water in the bottom. Following this drain down its length to right and left, we found it was just the place in which to lie concealed, if only we could find some sort of covering for the top that would look at all natural.

Unfortunately it was now practically light, and there was great danger that we might be seen whilst trying to construct a roof. Without some sort of covering we would almost certainly be discovered by the first passer-by. With this in view the two of us hastily snapped off a few small branches from the neighboring clearing, and stuck them into the sides of the top of the drain, so as to form a rough framework; then tear-

ing up some ferns of old-man's-hair which we found growing along the edge of the wood, we arranged them as quickly as we could on the top of the frame of branches, and removing our boots we wriggled in one by one, drawing them after us. This was all right for the first one, but extremely difficult for the second, owing to the want of space in our retreat, since there was no room for both of us to lie on our backs. We had therefore to wedge ourselves in, lying like a pair of spoons on our sides, pressed so close together that the slightest movement became impossible.

Our first sensations were of intense satisfaction at having at last found a place where we stood a reasonable chance of not being discovered, and great bodily relief after our long trek of the night before. Before long we felt the strain of supporting our heads above the water, in which we were partly immersed, but were able at length to alleviate this with the aid of our boots, which we contemplated using as pillows, though this was more easily thought of than done, as, owing to our wedged position, neither of us could put a hand out to reach the boots and draw them under our heads, although they were not more than six inches away, so that this had to be brought about by one of us rolling over on top of the other before he could get a hand free. This being accomplished, he rolled back into his

old position, with the added comfort of the boots as a pillow.

For a time we composed ourselves to rest with a sigh of content, only too glad to feel that we were at least out of the danger of immediate discovery; but before very long we began to realize that we had a very bad time in front of us. Fortunately it was not given to us to know how bad that day's experience would be — one that we should ever afterwards remember as the most terrible of our lives. No description of the awful time we spent in that drain, however vivid, could possibly depict the agonies of body through which we went. Owing to the cold and damp, we first were assailed in turn by an ague which nothing could suppress, our teeth rattling like castanets. This changed to the most severe cramp of the stomach and legs, which, owing to our position and not being able to move, it was impossible to alleviate. The cramp lasted till nearly midday, when quite suddenly it passed away, to be succeeded by a complete deadening of the limbs from the feet upwards — in fact, from the waist downwards we were as if made of stone, without any sign of feeling or life whatsoever. This was really a great mercy, as it relieved our previous suffering — anything was better than that awful cramp.

But now the likely possibility flashed across our minds that, when nightfall came, we might not be able

to continue our journey, if indeed we should be able to walk at all; and even if we got the circulation back into our legs and stuck it out during the following night, but did not succeed in crossing the frontier, should we be able to last another day and night without food, and could we possibly stand another day like this? Of course we should go on till we collapsed, but for that matter we might have done that already. We could only wait for nightfall to put it to the test.

Soon after the cramp had left us a party of children passed, so close indeed that it seemed as if they must be walking almost on top of us. We feared they might be poking along the drain in search of minnows or something. The danger passed, but for some little time we could hear children's voices, which kept us in a perpetual fear that some game or other might lead them accidentally to stumble upon us. From this time on pedestrians passed close by, either singly or in pairs at varying intervals, which brought us to the conclusion that we had chosen a spot near to some footpath or other across the fields, as we afterwards discovered to be the case. Just about this period it began to rain pretty hard, for which we were very thankful, although it made us more uncomfortable than ever, as we calculated it would reduce the number of pedestrians who would be likely to take a footpath across the fields.

Until the time when the first lot of children had passed, playing by the way as they went, we had felt pretty secure in our retreat, which was our chief consolation for being in such an awfully cramped place; but now that the danger of detection was becoming more frequent, owing to our close proximity to a path of some sort, we began to suffer mentally as well as physically. It was not long before we discovered that, if the rain reduced the number of people likely to be abroad in the fields, it was also very considerably diminishing our head-covering, which, if the rain did not soon cease, would be reduced to a minimum, on account of its being chiefly composed of old-man's-hair fern, which, as most people know, is a kind of grey fibre, very much like horsehair. These hairs, when dry, had formed a beautiful thick and fluffy covering, but now that they were soaked with rain they had become shrivelled and hung down in lank tresses. We could now see out perfectly clearly; but owing to the depth of the drain, and not being able to move, we could not observe any persons who passed, though we felt their eyes could not fail to spot us. This is, I know, very bad reasoning, since one can always see a passer-by from the window of a room without being seen in return.

But philosophic reasoning such as this requires a better mental and physical condition than was ours at

that time. Consequently we suffered tortures every time any one passed by. In one case in particular our nerves were strained to breaking-point. A man came along the path, carelessly humming a tune to himself. Just as he was passing us he suddenly stopped, and so apparently did our hearts. For a moment or two he stood motionless. How long he actually remained, or why he did so, I cannot tell, but to us it seemed a thousand years. Finally he moved off and started humming again, though he took our peace of mind with him. We felt sure that he must have seen us, but had feared to take us on single-handed, and had now gone to summon help. For that every German kept his eyes and ears open in the hopes of detecting escaped prisoners we were well aware, as the reward offered by the German Government for such information as might lead to the capture of prisoners was very considerable, especially for the hated English. Rumor had it that any person lodging reliable information received the sum of two thousand marks.

What should we do? If we crawled out, it would probably be hours before we got our legs to work, in the meantime being exposed to the view of everybody. No! we must stay, and pray that we were mistaken and had not been seen. From this time on, however, we were a prey to the most harassing fears, as we listened with bated breath for the slightest sound which might

foretell the coming of our captors. One or two more pedestrians passed, and at the coming of each we thought the game was up, but all went by without incident. Towards 6 P.M. the rain ceased, but the sky was overcast with heavy grey clouds, which, with the coming of dusk, decided us to try to extricate ourselves.

CHAPTER XIV

MAKING FOR THE FRONTIER

It was with the very greatest difficulty that we got out of that ghastly drain, owing to having lost the use of our lower limbs. Eventually my companion was the first to get clear, but it took a good quarter of an hour's work to accomplish this, and it was brought about by my placing my right arm (my left was pinned underneath me) round his neck and endeavoring to draw him over on the top of me, he at the same time pressing with both his hands against the opposite wall of the drain, and the two of us pulling and pressing in jerks, until finally he succeeded in rolling over on top. I was now able to edge my body into a flatter position at the bottom of the drain, owing to the removal of my friend's body making more room, at the same time supporting his weight on the top of mine. We were now no longer wedged, so that he was able to pull himself out by pressing on the two sides of the drain with his hands, and thus gradually edging himself along, dragging his useless legs behind him.

As soon as he was clear and I had had time to recover from my previous exertion, I succeeded in dragging myself out in the same way, the two of us edging along

until we found a broader part of the drain, when, pulling ourselves to a sitting position, we tried to induce the circulation to return to our legs, which we did by putting our hands under the knee-joints and raising them up and down. After about twenty minutes of this, both of us began to experience excruciating pain as the blood came back. However, we worked away with joy, the return of pain also indicating the return of circulation, and therefore the use of our limbs. It must have been nearly seven o'clock before we were able to scramble out of the drain and crawl to the shelter of the clearing close by. As it was not yet quite dark we felt that we should be safer in the clearing than in an open drain so close to the footpath; also we must get rid of some of the water in our clothes.

Crawling to the wood had still further aided our circulation, so that before long we were practising walking, which at first was not at all reassuring, but improved as we began to warm up. The two of us could not help laughing at ourselves during the time we were trying to walk about, when a leg would suddenly give way, precipitating the owner to earth. Very gradually we began to get the full use of our legs. This difficulty having been overcome, we proceeded to take off our clothes, in order that we might wring the water from them. I then cautiously returned to the drain for my boots, which I had the very greatest difficulty in put-

ting on. However, we were equipped and ready for the final venture at a little past eight o'clock, when we moved off westward as jolly as a couple of sand-boys. All the horrors of the past twelve hours were forgotten; the farther we walked the warmer we got, and in consequence more optimistic. Good Heavens! what feeble rats we had been! We were good for another week of this, and we felt that all was well with us.

Our object now was to strike the railway on which we had passed through the town the night before, when we had left it in order to avoid the party of workmen coming towards us. We had then rushed to our left; consequently the line must be somewhere to our right, so that we now travelled in the direction we judged to be northwest, according to our calculations during the day. As the stars were not yet visible we had nothing definite to guide us. Every moment we expected to strike the line, but it must have been quite nine o'clock before we eventually did so, although we had thought it could not have been more than half a mile away from our last hiding-place. On reaching it we carried out the same tactics as on the night before — that is, following the direction of the line at a distance of about one hundred yards. Several times our nerves were harassed by hearing voices; but we stuck to it for over an hour, when we found ourselves walking into a thin mist of white vapor, which got thicker as we ad-

vanced. We hoped greatly that this mist might be rising off the expected area of lakes. If so, it was now time to strike directly north in order to find our hoped-for railway, which would take us to the frontier itself. We advanced with added caution, crossed two main roads, and shortly afterwards succeeded in striking the railroad, on which we passed two level crossings which were lit up. Distinct sounds of people in conversation could be heard at each crossing. Very soon we began to get into wet and boggy ground, which decided us to make for the track, walking along it as quietly as we could. The heavens were now beginning to clear up gradually, and one by one the stars appeared.

We had not proceeded along the track more than half a mile when we passed a small cottage at the side of the line. Hurrying past this as noiselessly as possible, we were brought up sharp by a railing and large five-barred gate across the line. At the moment when we were about to climb the gate, the door of the cottage opened and a man stalked out. Possibly he did not see us, but he could not fail to hear us. We were over the gate in the twinkling of an eye, and were preparing to run for it; but fortunately our presence of mind returned as quickly as it had fled, and we walked on at a comfortable and leisurely pace. The man followed us, and was gaining. If he was a guard, why did he not call on us to halt? He could not have been more than forty

yards away. We quickened our pace a bit, just enough to keep the distance between us equal. The blood was beating in our temples and throats; we wanted to run, but we dared not even look behind us.

On we walked, our imagination running riot. We must have proceeded in this manner for a good half-mile, when suddenly I perceived that we were in the middle of a lake. We were indeed walking on the very embankment running over the lakes that we had calculated on. That we had actually arrived at the lake and walked over it for some distance without noticing it showed the state of nervous tension we were in. Nothing had taken our minds off the man, who was still following us, inexorable as fate itself. Very soon the reason why he had not challenged us was borne in upon us. Of course on the other side of the lake there would be another gate and guard, into whose arms we should walk and be taken like rats in a trap. Should I stop and hold him in conversation whilst my companion struck him down from behind? For it must be done silently. Yes, we must do this. But the idea of killing in cold blood is awful, and we walked on yet another one hundred yards. In doing so we passed a big iron wheel and sluice-gate, connecting the two sides of the lake through the embankment.

A little farther on we noticed a clump of small bushes growing on the sloping sides of the embank-

ment. This would be a good place in which to make an end of him. Silently we waited. The man reached the sluice-gate and stopped. He had missed us and was listening for our footsteps, we thought. But no! after a minute or two we heard the sluice-gate screeching out its note through the night air, to be followed by a rush of water. He must be the attendant of the sluice-gate. Thank God! Perhaps we had not raised his suspicions, so we hoped to hear him walking away, or that he would walk past us, and thus perhaps give us warning of what lay in front of us. But the rush of the water seemed to drown all sound. Cautiously I crawled back to the sluice, nearer and nearer, until I stood upon it. There was no man; he must have gone back. His suspicions had not been aroused.

I returned to my companion, and we moved off again, but soon decided that, walking as carefully as we could, we were making too much noise. To alleviate this, we stopped whilst I took off my boots. I had been wearing three pairs of socks till now, so I drew off the two thickest pairs, replaced my boots, and handed one pair of socks to my companion, when we both put them over our boots. This muffled the sound of our footsteps considerably.

As we advanced, we noticed the embankment getting perceptibly wider; also that, whereas as heretofore there had been no mist hanging over the water of the

lake itself, we were now running into a thin white vapor, which increased as we proceeded. From this we concluded that we were approaching the opposite bank, and must therefore increase our precaution. The sides of the embankment were now studded plentifully with small bushes, of which fact we took full benefit, moving from bush to bush as we went along. During our progress we noticed that we were no longer surrounded by water on either side, but by a slimy-looking bog, sprinkled here and there with tall reeds. We tried this bog, but immediately sank up to our knees in filthy mud, so that we were forced to return to the track. A little farther on we again tried the bog; it was dry this time, but still too bad to venture over.

The moon now thought it was about time she showed her presence on the scene. Fortunately she was balked of her full design by a veil of thin clouds, to which we sent up prayers of thankfulness, with a courteous request not to move off. Suddenly a brilliant speck of light shone out in the centre of the track, which immediately made us take to our knees, on which we crawled until we were within fifty yards of the light. As we had suspected, we could now detect a big gate across the track, upon which the light we had seen seemed to be suspended. As we were making plans how we should pass over this barrier, a man came out from a hut which we had not noticed before, owing to its being in

the shadows. He advanced to the light and unhooked it, carrying it with him back to his cabin and placing it on the ground outside his door.

Without waiting for any further developments, we crawled into the bog on our left. Fortunately it was fairly dry here, so we did not sink very much, but found it difficult to advance without making a certain amount of sucking noise as we crawled, caused by pulling our hands and knees out of the mud. We must have made more noise than we thought, for we undoubtedly raised his suspicions, as he came out of his hut and stood listening. Of course we stopped at once on seeing him, and cowered down into the mud; and although he could not possibly see, he went back to the cabin, and in a short space of time returned with his gun, to which we could hear him fixing his bayonet. During the time he was away, which was perhaps two minutes, we had taken advantage of his absence to crawl a good twenty yards farther away from him.

The reader may be surprised that we were able to distinguish his movements so well, but it must be remembered that he was standing on the railway embankment, whilst we were about thirty feet below him in the bog; consequently to us his figure stood out quite clearly against the sky-line. For a while he remained motionless (needless to say we did the same); then he walked to the far side of the track, and de-

scended out of view for a few seconds, a fact of which we took instant advantage to creep away another ten yards. This time he must have heard us again, for he passed off the track and started to descend towards us. We were just about to rise and make a bolt for it, when he stopped halfway down the slope, listening intently; then he quickly climbed to the track, seized his lantern, and placed it inside his hat. It had evidently struck him that his light was advertising his movements. Again we put yet another twenty yards between us, and in so doing crawled up a slight incline, the ground beneath us becoming drier at every step, until we found ourselves on a road, where we lay flat on our stomachs, watching for the next move of the sentry.

It was perfectly evident that his suspicions were fully aroused, for he was walking about like a cat on hot bricks. His actual movements we were now too far away to discern with any accuracy. The road we were lying on cut the railway line at right angles; hence the gate — it was a level crossing. The line, as we knew, was running west; therefore this road was due north and south. We decided to get on and join the railway line again, when we had made a big enough détour round the sentry. To do this we had to crawl one by one across the road on our stomachs, fearing that the whiteness of the road would show up our figures in too

strong relief if we crawled in the ordinary manner. On the other side was a hedge of prickly brambles. Over it we scrambled, to be pierced by a hundred thorns. On the far side of the hedge was a steep bank, and then — great Heavens! — another lake!

The road as well as the railway line was built on an embankment. I essayed to wade the water. It was past my depth. Silently we returned to the hedge, and began to help each other over, when suddenly I felt my companion grip my arm. The two of us remained motionless; the grip on my arm gradually tightened, which I took to mean silence, so I stood without moving, asking no questions, and all the time half supporting my companion's weight, who was perched on the hedge, with one leg the other side. Gradually he allowed his whole weight to rest on me, giving me a little nudge at the same time. Straining every muscle, I placed him on his own feet without making a sound; then, as we waited, hardly daring to breathe, suddenly a man cleared his throat with a little cough.

Great Heavens! he could not be six feet away, and I realized that, had my friend got over the hedge, he must have fallen almost into his arms. For a moment I felt petrified by the impending danger which had come upon us. Suddenly out of the dark, but before my brain had seized upon a plan of action, we heard a bell clang out its warning from the direction of the level

crossing. Simultaneously we heard the sentry shuffle round on the road and walk off. As the sound of his retreating footsteps grew fainter, we took the advantage of scrambling over the hedge as quickly as possible, cowering down under the shadow of the other side, where we waited a few seconds, in order to make sure that the sentry was not returning. Then we started to crawl away down the road, always keeping as close to the friendly shelter of the hedge as possible. Before we had proceeded very far we were startled by the shrill whistle of an engine. A moment or two and we could hear a heavy train panting towards us, and as she passed over the crossing we rose to our feet, and did a good couple of hundred yards' sprint down the road leading directly southward, feeling quite sure that the noise of the heavy train lumbering by would completely drown the sound of our hurrying feet.

Here we essayed the swamp again, but found it impossible, so at last we decided to follow the road south till we found dry ground to our right. About half an hour's walking brought us to a very small village on the edge of the marsh, really only a few scattered cottages; through this we went with the very greatest precaution, as there were still lights to be seen in one or two of the cottages. Immediately we passed through we found a great expanse of ploughed fields to our right. Over this we made our way, going slightly north

again, in order to strike the south end of the swamp, and thus keep in touch with it and our beloved railway line, which still apparently ran through the middle of it. Gradually the ploughed fields began to descend towards the bog, and in our anxiety to make sure of the bog we passed quite close to a big barn that had escaped our notice. As we did so a dog inside began to bark furiously. Instantly we rushed away southward again, the dog continuing to bark as long as we were in hearing.

Again we endeavored to make the margin of the bog. After having made a wide détour round the barn we struck it in safety, but this time it appeared to be drier, much to our satisfaction. We tried to walk on it, but it was not possible as yet. Following the bank, which ran almost due west, we tried it again. After about another mile it was still too wet, but here and there a solitary tree could be seen growing. These increased in number as we advanced, until at last we were brought up by a decayed wood, through which numerous rivulets were running. Here we plunged into the wood, over our ankles in peaty bog, and advanced northward in another attempt to hit the railway. Our progress was very slow, as we constantly had to jump ditches, some of which were too broad for us to make a successful landing on the other side, when we would slide back into the slimy water, only to pull ourselves out with difficulty.

In one place was a rivulet about forty feet wide, which of course it was impossible to jump. Noticing a heavy log on our side, we pushed it into the water, and reached the opposite bank one by one astride the log. This was not so easy as it seems, as the log rolled first this way and then that; but we finally managed to cross in safety without wetting the upper part of our bodies. Some people might say we ought to have jumped in and swum over, but they must remember the condition we were in. Both of us feared that, if we once got into the water, cramp might again overtake us.

Whilst still advancing northward we passed to higher ground, which grew drier as we proceeded, and before we had gone very far we suddenly stumbled on to the railway. Joy of joys! we had got our direction once more, when, following the railway for about a mile, which was still running due west, quite suddenly it branched southward. This rather put us off, but we decided to follow it for a little while longer; and a very good thing we did, as before long we were brought up sharp by numerous lines of lights, showing like pin-pricks in the darkness, some being red, others green. This must be a big junction of some kind. We crept cautiously nearer, more lights showing as we advanced. By the side of the track was a big hedge; to this we made our way, and lay down in the shelter of its shadow.

For the first time we realized that we were both very tired, but, strange to say, not in the least hungry — in fact, neither of us could have eaten anything, even if we had had it. As we lay resting ourselves the bells of a neighboring church chimed out the hour of twelve. Good heavens! only five hours to daylight; we must get on. Each said to the other we must start at once, but neither of us moved, our limbs refusing to obey us. I had a violent pain in the chest, my head ached, and my teeth would not cease from chattering. In the end the spirit gained over the flesh, and the two of us moved nearer to the lights, when, suddenly looking to our right, we discovered a bright light in the sky to the north. Great Scott! that must be the town of Venlo; there cannot be any other place big enough within fifty miles of here which could shed such a light as that, and Venlo was three miles over the Dutch frontier. My companion refused to believe we could be so near, but I insisted. Then, "What is this town in front of us?" "It must be K——," I replied — which is, as you know, just on this side of the frontier and southwest of Venlo.

For the moment our pains were forgotten, as we made towards the welcome lights of Venlo. But our troubles had only just begun; the climax of the venture was to come.

CHAPTER XV

ELUDING THE SENTRIES

As we walked towards Venlo over heavily ploughed fields, we found that we were very gradually ascending. On the way we passed a line of posts running in a straight line north and south. Was this the boundary? They were certainly boundary-posts of some kind. But then this could not be the frontier, as we had seen no sentries at all, and we knew there were at least two lines of them. Still pressing forward, only with added precaution, dropping on our faces every time we heard a sound or saw anything suspicious, we approached a sunken road, with what appeared to be a line of block-houses situated on it, at about a hundred yards apart. These were occupied by soldiers, as once or twice a door opened, letting out a flood of light, and exposing to view a man in German uniform, who left his house and walked over to another one, carrying a lantern. This he put out and went inside. All this time we were lying in suspense not more than sixty yards from one of these blockhouses.

Immediately the soldier had disappeared we crawled over the road, and advanced towards the glow in the sky already mentioned. Within a mile the plough

came to an end, and we found ourselves approaching what appeared to be a long hedge, but when we came up to it we found it to be the outskirts of a dense forest of broom. Into this we penetrated for a few yards, when we came across a little path cut through the broom. Here we held a whispered consultation, and decided that we did not like the look of it at all. We lay down in the broom beside the path, in order to hear any sound that might betray the fact that others were there besides ourselves.

Hardly had we sunk into the broom when the intense silence of the place was broken by the sound of footsteps, which came nearer and nearer, until a sentry with his gun at the slope passed us on the path; he was so close I could have touched him. It is not necessary to describe to what a pitch of excitement we were brought by our discovery that we were actually in the frontier lines. The moment of swift and fearless action had arrived! Drawing out my penknife, I hastily cut the laces of my boots, pulled them off, and padded silently in my stockinged feet down the path after the sentry. Fortunately this path had not been cut in a straight line, but wound about here and there, so that I was able to slip after him from corner to corner. Once or twice I imagined that I could distinguish his form in front of me, but I could hear the sound of his heavy tramp distinctly enough to know if he stopped, other-

wise I might have come upon him suddenly round a corner.

We must have proceeded about seventy yards in this manner when the soldier in front of me was challenged, but I could not catch the answer. Then I distinctly heard two, if not three voices in conversation, although I must have been quite thirty yards away, which led me to believe that, for the moment at least, our presence had not been suspected, or they would have been more careful to hush their voices. Again a slight noise led me to believe that our sentry was on the move. Instantly I slunk into the bushes to await events, thinking that perhaps he might be going to return, but nothing happened until I heard another challenge in front of me, this time very indistinct. I now came to the conclusion that we were in a line of outposts, and that our sentry was the visiting patrol, which turned out to be correct. If this was the case, then there must be another sentry very close to the spot where I had left my companion — too close, in fact, for peace of mind — and I immediately started to retrace my steps.

On my way back I noticed for the first time that I had passed a number of small paths, cut through the broom, in the same way as the one on which I was, but running at right angles to it — in fact, going towards what we supposed to be the frontier. Could we afford

to risk taking one of these? If there were any more sentries in front, certainly not. Whilst absorbed in these meditations I suddenly heard something coming towards me. Hurrying on, I arrived at the place where I supposed my friend was, and plumped down into the bushes. In a few moments the same sentry passed again, so close I could have touched him. Within from ten to fifteen yards he was again challenged, to which he answered "Friend," after which I thought I heard a few mumbled words passed between them about rain coming, and one of them moved off again. My difficulty now was to find my companion without making any noise that the sentry near us could hear. Creeping down the path, I tried to locate the place where I had taken off my boots, but I was absolutely at sea, when to my satisfaction I saw another figure creeping towards me.

Fortunately my friend had seen me come back, and had marked down my position. That 's the sort of pal a fellow wants in a venture like this — one that does n't say much, but who is on the job all the time. I 've stopped so often to analyze my own feelings, — for after all, they are the only ones I can analyze, — but I have often thought of what sort of suspense my friend must have gone through while waiting for me. We know so well that to wait is often the hardest part. And in waiting and watching, he had kept the bridge,

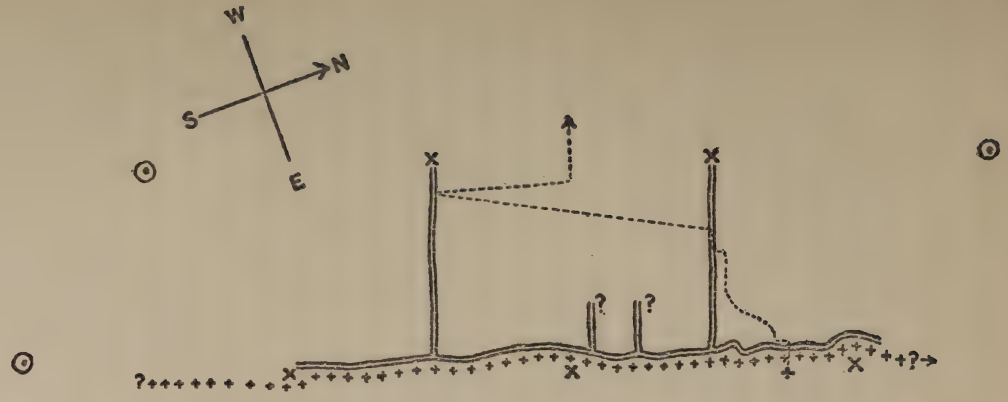
so that we were able to join forces again. Had he failed, we might have lost hours of time, and perhaps the whole venture, looking for each other in the dense brown murkiness. We then discussed in whispers the result of my scouting movement, deciding to take to the broom, and try to follow the direction of one of the paths running at right angles. This we put into immediate execution, but very soon found that the disturbance we were making would be fatal to us, since it is almost impossible to walk or crawl through thick whippy stuff like broom without making a noise; so, after having gone a few yards, we decided to trust ourselves to one of the paths, which we did, advancing along its edge and dodging from bush to bush.

The moon was now playing the most exasperating tricks; sometimes she would be quite hidden, only suddenly to flash out again between the light clouds which obscured the heavens. We must have made a bit over a hundred yards or so, when we again heard somebody talking, this time almost directly in front of us; so off we went into the broom again, travelling southwest, and within a few minutes struck another path running parallel with the one we had just left. This bucked us up, as we thought we had escaped a sentry in front of us on the other path; but our hopes were quickly dashed to the ground by the sight of the glowing end of a cigarette right beside the path which we were now

on, and not more than thirty yards in front. For a few moments we felt rather hopeless, but soon decided that we must risk crawling through the broom between the two of them. Accordingly we again entered the broom, working our way to a spot which we judged would be about equidistant between the two sentries, and started to crawl forward, taking the most infinite precautions.

We made our way through the broom, crawling one behind the other, the foremost carefully parting the bushes and holding them back for the passage of the one behind, in order that they might not whip back and cause a suspicious sound. Every ten yards or so one of us would crane his head cautiously above the broom to see if we were keeping direction relative to the drives. It was during one of these surveys that we discovered that we were on a level with the sentries on our right and left respectively; for there to our right was the other man, who was also smoking. "Blessed cigar, or whatever you are! What a splendid beacon light you show!"

Crawling on, we left the line of sentries behind us, and had proceeded a little distance when we found that the broom was gradually becoming thinner and thickly interspersed with heather, until finally only thick heather about a foot deep prevailed. Here we were able to notice that a slight wind had sprung up, which was



⊙ Sentries we imagined

X ▪ ▪ saw or heard

Drives cut in broom

+++++ Patrols

÷ Our first position

Line of Advance

encouraging, as it lessened the chances of our being heard. On the other hand, the moon had come out from behind a big mass of clouds, so that we could be seen from a very great distance. Fortunately she was sinking and would not trouble us much longer. In front of us lay a long stretch of flat heather, over which we must continue to crawl, both because our figures could easily be seen by the sentries behind us and because we did not know what might be in front of us.

We had passed through two lines, possibly we were actually over the frontier; but we dare not risk this. The dispositions of sentries that we had discovered and of those we had eliminated were as shown on page 235. Still crawling, we pushed forward slowly and cautiously—at first, in order to make sure that the sentries behind could see nothing; then, when we had put a good distance between us, we began to quicken the pace, until we were almost running on our hands and knees. But the effort of crawling for such a long period was quickly robbing us of what strength we had left. Every ten or twenty yards we were forced to sink down into the heather for a few moments' rest, in order to gather a little more energy to go on with, and also to stretch our legs out straight; for we were now suffering agonies with cramp, brought about by the unwonted exercise of the muscles utilized in crawling — even our tongues were curling back into our mouths; but

we set our teeth and crawled on, in spite of the cramp.

"We must succeed, we must beat the Boches! Gad! how sick they'll be if we get over! But shall we? Thank God, the people at home don't know we are hunted beasts, and they can't see the danger we are in; but you see it all, you old moon up there — you can see the dangers in front — you who see all the doings of the night, what does fate hold in store? — you with the tantalizing smile, so cold and aloof! I'd swear at you, if I was n't afraid of you. Please don't stare so."

Presently the moon sank behind a big cloud, and my friend and I were able to rise to our feet and walk slowly forward. The relief of being able once more to stretch our legs was intense. This did not last very long, however, as we suddenly caught the sound of a man's footsteps pacing evenly upon some hard and ringing substance. Instantly we were on our knees in the heather. Where on earth could the man be? There was no road of any sort, as far as we had been able to see before the moon had sunk behind the clouds. On every side of us was an unbroken expanse of heather, yet the sound of somebody walking was unmistakable, and grew more distinct as we crawled nearer. We were absolutely puzzled, when, looking to our right, I saw another beacon light, perhaps one hundred yards away. Somebody was smoking, and the smoker was moving.

At first he seemed to be coming towards us; but as our position could not be bettered by advancing or retreating, we decided to stay where we were, cowering down amongst the heather.

After a little while we decided that the light was moving away from us, to suddenly disappear altogether. Cautiously we crawled forward again, the sound of pacing growing so distinct that it seemed as if it could not be more than a few feet away. Suddenly, without any warning, the two of us found ourselves looking down into a sunken road, about forty feet deep and perhaps one hundred and twenty feet across, into which we must descend, down a steep sandy bank, to the hard surface of the road beneath. The sound of some one pacing puzzled us no longer; for there, not ten yards away, was a small hut, right in the middle of the sunken road, on the other side of which somebody was pacing up and down. We could not see the man, but we could distinguish when he was walking towards us, when he stopped, and when he was walking in the opposite direction.

Again we were disturbed by the sound of something moving roughly through the heather behind us. We were now threatened on both sides, so that immediate action was necessary. To slide down into the road, we waited till the sentry was apparently walking away from us, and then let ourselves head-first down the

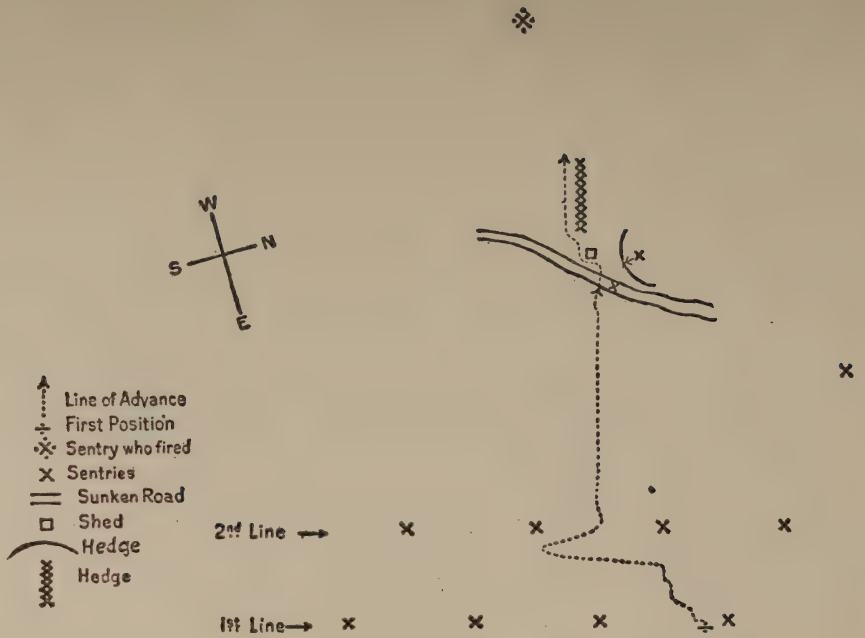
sandy slope. I dug my nails and toes into the sand, but the descent was too steep. Swish! and I found myself lying by the side of the road, waiting for my partner to follow suit. Swish! and he too lay beside me. For a moment we listened to hear if the sentry was on his return beat — we could not be sure. In that moment of waiting the moon came out again clear and bright, and the steps of the sentry were coming nearer and nearer. He could not fail to see us; our dark bodies against the glistening white of the road must stand out in relief. We lay still, hardly breathing. In a moment he would see us — perhaps he had done so already; he was taking aim, and we waited for the bullet. Oh the suspense of the moment! Slowly — it seemed ages — he advanced, and then we heard him swing round, and he was walking away again. Immediately we wormed our way on our stomachs across the road, and attempted to climb the other side in silence; but it was steep and sandy, similar to the side we had just come down, and for every two feet we went up we came down one.

Once more the sentry was on his return journey, which forced us to be silent again; but this time it was not so easy, as we were on the slope. In vain we dug our hands and feet into the sand; we slipped down slowly but surely, inch by inch. He could not fail to hear the slipping sand, or so we thought; but he did n't,

and on his again walking away from us we scrambled up, regardless of the noise we made. Still he seemed to hear nothing, but we gained the top in safety.

As soon as we got our breath, and had time to survey our new position, we found, to our surprise, that we were lying beside a new railway track under construction. Directly up against us was a large heap of flint-stones, evidently for use on the track. To pass over this, without dislodging a single flint, would be impossible. However, get over it we must, and we finally managed to cross without making very much disturbance; but it was no joke for me, without any boots on. Once over the other side, we hurried across the track. In front of us was a large shed, evidently used for stores and tools, as there were several wheelbarrows about. Fearing there might be a night watchman of some sort, we started to skirt round it to the right, and had not cleared the track more than a few feet when we practically ran into the arms of a sentry. Whether he saw us first or we him I do not know. He was n't more than forty yards away, only a small hedge separating us from him.

We were fairly caught. Immediately I grabbed my friend's arm, and walked him straight up to the tool-shed, knocking at the door. The sentry was walking rapidly towards us. At the moment I knocked he called "Halt!" at which the two of us doubled round the shed


W
N
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Line of Advance
First Position
Sentry who fired
Sentries
Sunken Road
Shed
Hedge
Hedge
2nd Line
1st Line

on the other side, putting it between him and us. Twice we heard him frantically yell "Halt!" but we had seen a tall hedge to our left, running in the direction we were making for. To this we sprinted, and kept on running under its shadow, till we dropped for want of breath. Every moment we expected to hear the whiz of a bullet, but evidently we had shaken him off.

It was now pitch-dark, the moon having disappeared for good, for which we were very thankful. But before we had recovered our breath sufficiently to press on again, the silence of the night was rudely broken by the sound of six shots, fired in quick succession. This firing must have been half a mile to our right, but in the stillness of the early morning it sounded very much nearer. Alas! in our own extremity of the moment, we had forgotten the other pair of escapers. Fortunately we never connected these shots with our late comrades, or the knowledge would certainly have caused us great anxiety for their safety.

Very soon we felt sufficiently recovered to go on, also we were anxious to get farther away from the sentry who had so nearly taken us, fearing that he might be putting dogs on our track, although we calculated that we must now be out of danger, even if we were not actually over the frontier, since we had passed two lines of guards in the broom, and now this last line which

we had just got through. The Germans could not possibly have more than three lines, as they were too badly in need of men at the front, or so we thought, to be able to waste them guarding the frontier.

Slowly and painfully — for we were very nearly at the end of our tether — we made our way eastward through a thinly planted wood, on the other side of which we traversed a large area of plough. For some time, now, the struggle to push forward had been purely a matter of mental control. I had an extraordinary sensation, never before experienced, of mental detachment of mind from body. I felt as if the real me were floating above the clumsy, lumbering body, urging the weak flesh to further effort. Sometimes the detachment was complete, when we tripped over every root, tumbled into every bush, and fell into every hole in the ground, and yet we picked ourselves up, unheeding, and staggered on again. We now felt so certain that we were over and safe that we actually began to discuss the fact, without troubling to lower our voices very much. Suddenly a man called "Halt!" Looking to our left, we saw a figure bearing down on us. He could not have been more than twelve yards away, or we should not have seen him in the darkness. "Come on!" and we were running over plough for dear life. "Halt!" On we raced. Then his first shot rang out. What a wicked crack it made, as the bullet struck the ground some-

where by my feet! I was doing better time than I had ever done on the wing in my footer days, and then the second bullet came just under my nose. I could feel the rush of air on my mouth. His third shot passed a foot or two above my head.

Where was my companion? A fourth shot and a heavy fall some distance behind me. "My God! they've got him!" Should I stop? No! it is each for himself now — that was understood. Then another shot rang through the night, somewhere a long way behind. The sentry was finishing my friend. Horrible! Still on I flew, suddenly to fall head over heels into a ditch. I was too done up to go any farther, and lay gasping for breath; but the spirit of self-preservation is a hard one to break, and before long I was calculating what I must do next. The light of dawn would soon be upon me. I must get to a better hiding-place for the coming day.

What's that moving towards me? Is it my fancy? No. By Gad! it's a man, and he's moving so slowly it must be the sentry; he is looking for me. He will walk almost on top of me. All right, my friend; if you miss me by a foot, I'll strangle you from behind. The figure came on, was beside me; in a flash I was on his back and had laid him out. A familiar groan. Good Heavens! it was my companion. I almost cried over him, but his temper had gone with the blow I had given him, and it

was some time before he would have anything to do with me.

"I followed you as best I could," he gasped, "and I thought I had lost you, and I have n't the faintest idea where I am. That brute turned on to me after he had given you the first three. The first one hit me just under the heel and laid me flat, but I got up and rushed in the direction I thought you had taken. Then he fired again, but it was miles behind me."

When my friend had sufficiently recovered his breath we started off again, and after a few hundred yards entered a region of decayed woods. Here we experienced great difficulty in advancing, owing to our exhausted condition, caused by the lack of food and the extreme cold. Continually we tripped over the stumps of trees in our path, to go sprawling full length over the other side, only to pick ourselves up in a dazed determination to press forward as long as any strength remained in us. Time after time we crashed to the ground in our blind progress, until finally the two of us fell over at the same spot, where we eventually decided to rest till the coming of dawn, which was just about to break.

Whilst we were resting it was gradually borne in upon us that we were not alone in the wood, as we could hear something rustling up to us through the undergrowth. As yet it was some distance away. In-

stinctively we got to our feet and stumbled on again, a little refreshed by our short rest. Once or twice we stopped in order to find out if we were being pursued, and discovered that every time we halted the person behind did the same. Evidently he must be trying to get our position by the noise we were making as we passed through the undergrowth, the fact of which he seemed to have taken full advantage, for it appeared to us that he was very much nearer than when we had first heard him.

Somehow we managed to move forward at a faster pace than we had done hitherto, and in doing so we passed through a small clearing, in which we noticed some bundles of cut fagots, and the idea struck me that they might possibly help us to evade our pursuer. Hurriedly seizing one or two of these fagots, we plunged into the undergrowth on the far side of the clearing; then stopped to get the direction of the man behind, who in his turn stood still, as soon as he discovered we were not moving. I then swung one of the heaviest fagots to our left, right over the top of the bushes. Immediately it landed the man started off in the direction of the noise it had made as it fell through. In the meantime we remained silently crouching in the bushes. Eventually we heard the man, or whatever it was, pass us to the left in the direction where I had thrown the fagot, and we heard no more of him.

It was broad daylight before we moved on again, and found that we had been resting within a few yards of the edge of the wood. In front of us there was an expanse of plough, but quite different to what we had previously seen. Here the fields were neatly trimmed; hedges divided one field from another; also the furrows were more regular, and not so far apart. My companion and I discussed the fact, and decided that it did not look at all like the work of the Boches, which led us to believe that we were really over at last. So we were, and had been for a couple of miles past, though, of course, we had no means of knowing it. We heard afterwards that the man in the wood to whom we had given the slip was a Dutch sentry. Oh! if we had only known it, we should most certainly have hugged him round the neck, and probably asked him for something to eat: not that we were in the least hungry: we had long ago passed that.

At the end of one of these ploughed fields we were brought to a halt by a broad ditch about thirty feet across, on the other side of which was a railway line. How on earth were we to get over this? Personally I sat down in despair, wondering in a dazed sort of way who put the beastly ditch there. My friend scouted to right and left for a bridge, but found nothing. On returning to me, he noticed that I was sitting on a long pole.

"Buck up, old man! that's the very thing we want," he said. "We can pole-jump it." And so we did.

On the far side of the railway track we reached a small village, situated on a big main road. Crossing the road, we saw a line of trees running north and south as far as eye could see — beyond the trees a long white line, of what appeared to be mist. As we approached we discovered it to be a river. When we reached its margin, it was found to be about three hundred yards across.

"It's the Meuse!" I shrieked, "and we're over, man. We have been over three miles, and did n't know it. Do you understand, you blockhead? We're over! We're free! We've escaped!"

Then I for one sat down and cried like a child. Very soon my companion decided that we must swim to the other side.

"Swim over that, in our condition! You must be mad! I tell you the Meuse does not run into Germany anywhere within a hundred miles of where we are."

"Well," he replied, "it will be safer the other side," — and he started to take his coat off.

"Don't be a blithering idiot; you could n't swim that even if you were fit and strong. However, go ahead, old thing! I'll watch you drown. I'm perfectly content to lie here forever and ever."

CHAPTER XVI

LIBERTY AND BLIGHTY!

And so the two of us lay and wondered at it all, until we heard the sweet clear bells of some church far up the river strike the hour of seven.

"Look here, old man, we're getting stiff again; we must push on to some place or other."

Accordingly we walked northwards, hugging the river-bank, and after about an hour's tramp we came to the outskirts of Venlo. Passing through that part of the town which lies on the east bank, we arrived at the great bridge. Over this we started to make our way, feeling that we should like to put the river between ourselves and the enemy. In the middle of the bridge we were halted and questioned by the Dutch guard. When we declared that we were two British officers just escaped from Germany, the Dutch N.C.O. looked rather doubtful. As he did not speak either German or French we had some difficulty in convincing him. Certainly our appearance was not very reassuring. My companion did not look so bad, though his clothes were badly torn, and he was covered with slime from head to heels; but his field-boots were field-boots, and as such should have commanded attention. As for my-

self, I was a horrible-looking sight; and, to make things worse, my socks were worn through, disclosing cut and bleeding feet.

After about ten minutes' wait on the bridge one of the sentries was told off to take us to the caserne, or barrack-room; so we were conducted back to the east side of the bridge. Here we were told that the officer in charge was not up, but he would be immediately informed of our arrival. Within a minute or two the officer himself came to welcome us, and ushered us into his bedroom, where he was completing his toilet.

What a splendid welcome that Dutch officer gave us! With his own hands he took off my socks and washed my feet, smearing the sore cuts with some stuff which he seemed to have great faith in. Finding that my friend's boots were too much for him, he called in a couple of his orderlies, who managed, after a great deal of pulling, to remove them from his swollen feet. Then the Dutch officer bustled about, ordering breakfast for us. What would we like? Eggs and bacon, of course! All the English liked that.

"Yes, my cook does them beautifully; you shall see."

Then he made us take off our clothes and wash; clean shirts and vests were supplied from the officer's wardrobe; and, finally, he rang up the military doctor, and informed him that he had a couple of bad cases. All the time he bustled about helping us here and there,

and never seemed tired of informing us what fine fellows we were, to which, of course, we both agreed. When the breakfast arrived, he hovered around us like a hen with her chicks, but we were hardly able to eat anything. With great difficulty we managed to swallow an egg, more to please the good fellow than anything else.

Soon after breakfast the doctor arrived, and we were hustled off to the hospital in a cab. Here we were treated like princes. Nothing was too good for us. It was nice to be fussed over and taken care of, after being neglected so long, and we thoroughly appreciated their kindness. First we had a very hot bath. Oh the luxury of having a real bath once more! After the bath we went off to bed and slept the clock round. Another bath, heaps to eat, and more sleep! The doctor said we must stay until we felt strong enough to make the journey to Rotterdam. When was the next train, we asked. Oh, in a few hours. Well, we felt strong enough now for Rotterdam, and as soon as may be England, and then home.

And so that morning we left Venlo and all the kind friends we had made, and journeyed to Rotterdam, accompanied by another Dutch officer, travelling in first-class Pullman carriages. On our arrival we were handed over to the British Consulate. Everybody there was kindness itself; arrangements were made for us

to buy civilian clothes, and before very long we were completely fitted out.

From Rotterdam we were removed to The Hague (pending a British boat to take us to England), where the British Ambassador and his wife made us welcome at the Embassy. Here again nothing was too good for us, and we shall always remember the great kindness they showed us, which affected me deeply after our terrible experience.

And then the great day arrived when we actually set our feet in England once more!

But what would England be like? How had she stood the strain of nearly three years' war, with an expenditure of nearly eight millions a day? That such a stupendous sum had been gathered from the resources of our Empire, without the fear of immediate bankruptcy, only filled us with a joyous pride for the race to which we belonged. But what of the toll of blood and bone? Was that as frightful as it had been represented to us? Not that we had been really influenced by "The Continental Times," or any other paper which the German Government propagated amongst the Allied prisoners of war, as part and parcel of their general system of persecution; for the German is a master of mental as well as physical agony. But these papers, which were our only source of regular news, had laid the foundation of a doubt, deep down within our

hearts, that perhaps all was not quite so well with those at home; for when day followed day, and weeks grew into months, and months into years, and no appreciable advance had been made by the Entente, it would take a very hero of optimism, if not a fool, to remain absolutely free from the canker of doubt. In existing circumstances it was impossible to calculate how long we must continue to live as exiles, under these appalling conditions. We dare not look for the speedy return of peace, for an early peace would mean the cause of the Entente was lost, the triumph of wrong over right, which must surely be impossible; and so the prisoners made it their duty to laugh, and say, "Oh! three or four years longer," when asked surreptitiously by some German soldier or other as to how long the war would go on.

I wonder if the people at home ever realize that the prisoners in Germany number amongst their ranks some of the greatest heroes of this war. On the battlefield the heroes, or at least some of them, are recognized, and rewarded accordingly; but the exile is never known, though he fights against far more hopeless odds; for him there is no chance — all is at an end. Fine deeds are done in the heat of action, when the excitement of the moment gives the spur to many a noble act; but it takes a braver and more steadfast spirit to pass smiling and cheerful through the endless

stunted and hopeless days of a prisoner's life, to cheer up those of our comrades who have for the moment fallen into the slough of despondency, and to harass the German guards at every turn in the matter of attempted escape, since if the prisoners were peaceably quiescent the number of their guards would be reduced, thus freeing so many more men to go and fight against their brothers on the front. The more escapes, the more guards necessary to prevent them, the more electric lights or oil lamps to show up the designs of the escapers by night, the continual supply of coal and oil necessary to feed these lights, slowly but very surely help to drain the resources of the Boches. This can be more easily seen when it is realized that the combined Allied prisoners in Germany run into millions.

There are those who might say that the amount of coal and other things used for the exterior lighting of camps could not be a serious item. Very true. But, however small, it all counts, and it is the only way that a prisoner can help to do his bit. If he tries to escape he is punished, sometimes very severely; but he accepts it as part of his lot, because he feels that the more men placed to guard him, the less men there will be to fill active positions. I have met many people in this country since my return who don't believe — or more probably don't want to believe — that the life of a prisoner is as bad as some of us make out. All I can say is, I wish

they could try it for themselves. Let them put up with the pestilential insanitary filth and the nauseating stench of camps without any sort of drainage; the bitter cold of the long winter without adequate warmth; the daily slaving of cooking tinned food and washing up greasy plates in freezing water afterwards; the difficulty of cleansing underlinen without the necessary utensils to wash it in; the mental torment of being without any authentic information of the fortunes of war or of the fate of those dear to us, whilst the flagposts with which every camp is fitted are periodically gaily beflagged with enormous military banners flaunting some great German victory which the Boche sentries seldom lose the opportunity of sarcastically pointing out! Lucky indeed is the town or village which boasts of a *Kriegsgefangenen* — prisoners' camp! To be inspected on Sundays as curious and despicable animals behind a wire cage by the German populace, decked out in holiday attire for the occasion, who mock and gaze through field-glasses at one's face or the legs of those wearing kilts, shouting lewd remarks as the animals march up and down their confined exercise-ground; to have one's precious letters from home the subject of offensive remarks from German officers attached to the camp, — these are only a few of the more outstanding troubles that a prisoner must bear with a smiling face.

Had the Boche in the beginning started by treating his prisoners with the respect and honor which is their due according to The Hague Convention, it would still be the duty of every prisoner to make his escape, if possible; but then the offensive spirit would have ended, for a holder of the King's commission must carry out the spirit in which that commission is given — the path of duty, even unto death, in whatever circumstances that path may lie. But taking into consideration the unscrupulous character of the enemy, as shown by the treatment of his prisoners, it is the duty of each able-bodied officer and man to carry out the offensive spirit in every way possible. Some of the men have been magnificent, and have carried this spirit to the highest possible heroism.

I have so often been asked, since my return home, "How do you feel about it all? Will you ever wipe out the memory of those long wasted years? Don't you sometimes dream you're back in it all again?"

I don't know quite how to answer that. It is difficult to describe one's thoughts and feelings in this connection. It is as if some of the best years of one's life had been erased — wiped out. There is a sudden jump, from the joy of living and the exuberance of youth, to the dull monotony of middle age, with no easy, transitory stage in between to compensate. Even now, remembering those years, that life seems, somehow,

natural, and the present life of freedom, unnatural. The lights, the laughter, happy people — all seem unreal; it is like seeing dancers through a window when you can't hear the music. It passes over one's head, and one finds one's self waiting for the curtain to drop, for the end of the play, when the fairies and the tinsel shall disappear, and one shall find one's self back in the dull, grey hopeless days which it is nearly impossible to realize are over.

But to return to our impressions as the train gradually bore us to London from the port at which we had disembarked from Holland. Everything seemed to be as of yore. The long rolling fields bounded by broad hedges, the picturesque farms nestling in hollows, with fat cattle grazing over every hilltop, the wonderful soothing green of the general landscapes, brought a heavy sigh of content to be back in it all again. Everything seemed as if we had just left it. On the platform we saw numbers of men of military age. Surely things must be going pretty well, or all these men would be in uniform, they would have been called up long ago; or were they still playing at conscription in the matter of exemptions? Perhaps all these were shirkers, who did not know of or did not care for the great need of the Motherland in her dire distress, who had pitted herself in her unreadiness, in the cause of honor and right,

against the greatest military nation on earth, organized to the last man, and beyond that again.

Soon we arrived in London, to report ourselves immediately to the War Office. But London amazed and appalled us. She was so vast. Taxi-cabs, motor-buses, and pedestrians thronged the streets as never before, or so it seemed to us. We hesitated to cross the street, the traffic seemed so dangerous and formidable. We were hustled off the pavement by constant streams of people going this way and that, none of whose faces seemed to spell war. One saw practically no people in mourning, whilst in Germany one sees them everywhere. Men in uniform passed by in thousands. Tommies looking at the sights and standing in groups at the street corners — why, there must be enough men in uniform here to form an army! Surely, if we were in need, these fellows would all be out at the front. Things must be going very well, and we had heard nothing but a piece of colossal impertinence. And so we more or less found it to be.

Every hotel seemed crammed; it was impossible to get in anywhere. The theatres, too, were running at high pressure; one must book seats weeks beforehand. In fact, everything looked as if there was no war going on at all, and yet organization relative to war was evident at every turn; and we began to feel a great relief. The Old Country was big enough to give her utmost to

the war and yet carry on her life of business and gaiety at the same time.

Some time in October, 1917, an Escaped Officers' Club was formed in London. For the present it is a dinner club, since we have no clubhouse as yet. Our aim is to make it an international affair — Americans do, of course, automatically become members of the British Club, but we hope to get the French to amalgamate with us on the same basis.

We boast that it is the most exclusive club in the whole world, for the entrance fee is "Escape, with the odds at 600 to 1 against a man." And the motto of the club is —

"FREEDOM, BUT NOT FORGETFULNESS."

THE END

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